

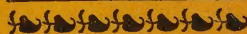


*The
Golden
Fleece*



JOHN
GUNTHER

H A R P E R S









THE GOLDEN FLEECE

03
250

THE GOLDEN FLEECE
A NOVEL BY JOHN GUNTHER
AUTHOR OF THE "RED PAVILION", "EDEN FOR ONE" ETC.



HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS
NEW YORK AND LONDON
M DCCCC XXIX

THE GOLDEN FLEECE, COPYRIGHT,
1929, BY JOHN GUNTHER. PRINTED
IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

First Edition

B-D

☞ FOR HELEN AND MICKEY

CONTENTS

Book One

INTRODUCTION TO JOAN 1

Book Two

PHILIP 115

Book Three

JOAN AND A GHOST 243

¶ BOOK I: *Introduction to Joan*

him in other ways; in indulgent moments, rare with him, he was accustomed to think they were both aristocrats. She was (he thought) direct, boyish, fresh, and very sturdy. Mr. Tilford wanted Joan to be an ambassador's wife, and it was typical of him that he would have cut out his tongue before telling her so.

II

They were by no means extremely rich. On the other hand, they were very well-off. They had the house, the property downtown, the place in Maine, two cars, four servants. They traveled a good deal. They bought books and furs and pictures. They had the power to bend the physical contours of life to their wishes in all moderate detail. Joan had everything she wanted, and so did the rest of them. But their wants were not exorbitant. From top to bottom they were simple people.

Outside Joan's room was a small blond tree with more branches seen in profile on one side than on the other, so that it looked like a young girl with the wind blowing back her hair. The lawn, a smooth green window-shade, unrolled slowly from the brick walls of the house to the beach, there leveling into a yellow stretch of sand. The water was very calm and blue in summer. Far to the right rows of giant apartment houses were visible, rising where the shore turned outward; illumined at night they resembled flat lanterns. From her window Joan could see them, beacons patrolling the lake, and on a clear day the lake itself was visible along its upward shore for thirty miles.

Part of her room was an alcove, built out of the room proper and bound on three sides by glass so lucent that the white pipings between the panes barely sufficed to

break the illusion of open air. The chairs and tables and most of the woodwork were lacquered a dull silky blue and the curtains were orange. There was a small white bed in one corner, and on the wall above it a splendid, blazing splash of color by some Spanish painter. The room was full of scattered hexagons of books, piled casually so that the top ones overlapped those beneath, and on the window seats stood heaps of flowers like curly colored heads. It was both a sober and a sunny room.

The room was one of fourteen all of them combined in a house which a skillful and expensive architect had conceived as a spur to brother architects. It was a house of almost aggressive modernity and contained various subtle technical devices for the disposition of laundry, the incineration of waste, and the electrical cleansing of dishes. On the top floor were rooms for Joan and Pamela and two spare bedrooms, one of them now occupied by Fay; Mr. Tilford and Mrs. Pomeroy lived on the middle floor below. Mr. Tilford's library was downstairs on the first floor, together with those other common rooms which the skillful and expensive architect had deemed necessary to perfect harmony. Externally the house was finished in gray stone with red brick window-sills and mountings, and two bright red roofs over the porches; but pleasant as it was, a visitor would hardly have noticed it, except as one of a prosperous line of houses skirting the left side of Sheridan Road somewhere in the eighty hundreds.

Joan grew up in an atmosphere of which these things were the concrete expression, and now they were beginning to pall. She wanted to get away, to see herself against a new background, emotional and physical. Most of her upbringing had been directed, not didactically, to one end—that there was a fineness in the Tilfords, in herself, in Pamela, in her father, and that this fineness,

a precious thing, should not casually be spoiled. There had been no strictures in her childhood. They had not been necessary. She had always done exactly what she wanted to do. Perhaps for that reason, with her father's example before her, she had been so happy in childhood; the things she wanted to do she did, because, wanting them, they were therefore right. Things that were wrong did not exist. There was no need to be rebellious. She wasn't rebellious now. But she wanted to get away. Encircled for many years by her fineness, she was beginning to wonder what was beyond.

This was the spring of 1925 and Joan was about twenty-one. Sometimes she thought back. She was three when her mother died, five when Roosevelt left the White House, only eleven when the war began. She missed the war entirely. She was thirteen when her father voted for Wilson the second time and about eighteen, midway through college, when Wilson died. She remembered only vaguely things like a song called "Poor Butterfly," the old Michigan boulevard, a dance called the "turkey trot," and the first Tilford motor-car, that immense and terrifying affair with the back seats elevated a full foot over the front, and shiny brass lamps commanding the fenders. On the other hand she remembered distinctly such things as the rush for bobbed hair, the first Atlantic flight, the year that burnt orange was the fashionable color, songs like Avalon, and even a man named Bryan and the early days of broadcasting.

She had been brought up so that she could do nothing expertly. Probably this misfortune was also the result of an expensive American education which left her superficially prepared for only the one thing she did not want to do. She did not want marriage yet. It was too bad, perhaps, that she hadn't gone East to school; well, that

was because she wanted to be near her father. Of course, school wasn't everything. She had made her *début*, tasted what people call society and had traveled a little, in America. Unlike her friend Shirley Northway, she had not chosen any special field of activity to develop for herself and conquer as her own; she wasn't an artist or a musician or an actress or a sculptor or even an advertising writer. She would like to have been an explorer, she sometimes thought.

Between Joan's room and Pamela's was a bathroom. It was rather an extraordinary bathroom, extravagantly large and white; entering it, one was conscious of a smooth white glitter focused at once from all four walls, floor, and ceiling. The water in the broad tub was clear, but at the same time possessed an illusion of solidity, so that bubbles of light imprisoned below the surface shone like points in crystal.

Joan during her shower kept laughing. Pamela, however, was surly in the morning and growled when Joan awakened her. Joan would leave the tub shaggy in a towel and usually laughing, and sometimes Pamela dodged in the room and saw Joan's tawny body, partly obscured by steam in the big silver mirror, looking like a warm tan jig-saw puzzle not finally fitted together. The brightest thing about her were her eyes, which like her teeth were dazzling white, blue white.

Where had she got her delightful square head from? Of course it wasn't really square. But sometimes it looked that way, probably because her black hair was so thick, and cut so rectangularly around her face; it hung down straight, lopping off the curve of each cheek. Of course it was as short as a boy's behind. Beneath the black square hair she had almost perfectly blue eyes. Her mouth was small and red, the upper lip often lifted a little

and short—her mother's mouth, people said. She was sturdily and somewhat squarishly built, with broad, supple, and decisive shoulders. The V-shaped muscles upward from her throat were long, however, and there was a soft, shadowy hollow low in the throat between the collar bones, where the muscles began. People seemed never to get over it that her squarely cut hair was so black, and under it her sensible eyes so blue-white, very blue, very white.

III

Breakfast was best on Sundays. Then they wandered down unhurried, and usually the meal lasted most of the morning. This Sunday they talked chiefly about a party Joan wanted to have for Fay later in the week. Fay was her closest friend, and a man named Philip Hubbard was in town, in whom Fay seemed vaguely interested. What was chiefly on Joan's mind was a slowly stirring desire to get away. She hadn't told her father yet. But he was guessing. He always did.

Pamela came in; she was still sleepy and like a cat rubbed up against Mr. Tilford and yawned. Joan watched them close to one another; they were suddenly quite oblivious to the fact that she was there, but in such a manner that sure acceptance of her presence made the oblivion possible. Pamela kept yawning, her forehead against her father's coat, and Joan watched and felt moved. How queerly charged emotionally even the simplest of such family groups could be.

"Something inside me says to do this and something else says not to," Joan was saying. "Intensely. I don't know what to do."

"You must feel," Mr. Tilford laughed, "a little like

a civil war. Here." He passed the toast. "Have another piece—pretend its weltschmerz."

Bessie came in, bearing bacon. Pamela leaped and ate. "I'm quite serious, father, and upset."

"Blah!" Pamela said.

"And of course," Joan went on, "I'm dreadfully worried about you." Mr. Tilford looked up. "You're pale and you're extremely abstracted. Oh yes!—maybe you ought to go away too."

"Me? Good heavens!"

Mrs. Pomeroy came in. She was dressed adequately, but as soon as breakfast was over she would retreat to her room and dress again; always she did this on Sunday mornings. She was externally an extremely fashionable woman, partly on account of inward trepidation that she was not fashionable. For this reason she was forever in the forefront of new movements. To most of them she wanted to click her teeth and say her familiar, "Well!—I never!" in an old-fashioned, comfortably deprecatory manner; but instead she had forced herself through long practice to instinctive pursuit of what was new. She had been concerned the year before with spiritualism and ectoplasm, but now it was Nudity on the Stage, City Planning, and the Youth Movement in Germany. She was a great reader of the works of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Time never quite caught up to Mrs. Pomeroy. She was a very charming woman.

"I don't like you very much this morning," Pamela rambled as she came in.

"Tut!"

"Child," said Mr. Tilford, "you never like anyone so early in the morning."

"This is a very special dislike," Pamela said. "I have secret reasons. I'm angry."

"When angry," Mr. Tilford said, slyly, "count ten slowly ——"

"We've heard *that* before!" Joan laughed. It was notorious that Mr. Tilford had never lost his temper in his life.

"My God!" ejaculated Pamela, looking at the *Tribune*.

"Blasphemy," murmured Mr. Tilford. "A habit of mind."

"Did you order the chairs, father?"

"Yes, darling," he answered Pamela.

"I wonder if fifty are enough."

"How many people did you invite?"

"About forty."

"Well, then, fifty will be enough."

"The party!" Joan exclaimed. "I'd almost forgotten it."

"Say—suppose we don't like this friend of Fay's?" Pamela demanded.

At about eleven Sarah came in to take away the breakfast dishes. Sarah was a worthy woman, buxom, blond, Scandinavian, who had been in Tilford service for twenty years. She was having a little trouble with her eyes now, and wore steel-rimmed spectacles except when actually serving at table. Sarah was a great moral force in the Tilford family, and recognized as such.

"You ha'n't finished yer bacon, Joan."

"Been thinking," Joan explained.

"And on a fine bright mornin' like this!"

"Discipline her, Sarah," Mrs. Pomeroy demanded.

"I'll git her some more hot." Sarah winked at Mr. Tilford, thus putting Mrs. Pomeroy in her place. "The child must eat."

Sarah retreated and gave the news to Bessie. Sarah was superior to Bessie, a novice who had been with the

Tilfords a mere fifteen years. Bessie was angular, also blond, and a marvelous cook. She was a dictator, however. No Tilford had anything to do with the Tilford kitchen. Bessie and Sarah, together with Helena, the second maid, ate in the kitchen when the family was done, chronicling and discussing events, and little did the family know of its own inmost doings.

Mrs. Pomeroy expanded her considerable bosom capaciously, smiled at Joan, tapped Mark on the shoulder, folded her napkin, slipped strenuously from the room.

"You must be kinder to your aunt," Mr. Tilford announced. "Remember, she's getting old and she hasn't any really exciting personal contacts any more, and she's rather lonely, I think."

"Really, I like her very much," Pamela said. "But I heard her telephoning to that New Thought man last night."

Pamela finished her coffee, dropped the paper, and moved back in the chair. When she left rooms she bounced or skated.

"Where going?"

"Out."

"How old are you, my lambkin?" mildly interpolated Mr. Tilford.

"Sixty."

"What car?"

"Dad, may I have Louie?"

"No."

"All right. Joan, lend me yours, will you?"

"Of course. Be out all day?"

"Uh-huh. When can I have a car, father?" Pamela asked.

"Sixty is too young," Mr. Tilford said.

Pamela departed and Mr. Tilford slipped a hand on

Joan's shoulder. Their eyes met and they smiled. She put a hand to his arm and he moved the arm to his side, imprisoning her fingers. He rang for Louie. "You're rather subdued," he said to Joan.

Louie entered, bobbing and bowing; he was a Japanese who inserted between most of his remarks the locution "Z-zz-z!" Mr. Tilford had nicknamed him straight-off Louie. No one remembered why. "Car," commanded Mr. Tilford.

"Yessir."

"Louie, do wear a different tie," implored Joan.

"Z-zz-z! Yessum!"

Louie was not of the hierarchy of Sarah and Bessie, who called Joan simply Joan.

"I must go," Mr. Tilford said. He often worked Sunday mornings. Joan thought he hadn't stopped working for twenty years.

Fay came in. Breakfast began again. No one ever arrived at the same time on Sundays.

"What a week!" Fay sighed. "I'll die before the thing gets on. D'you know, that rehearsal last night—I didn't get home till two—and today I've gotta go down again. Hello! Joan, you look as if you had a secret. Tell us? No? Please—Sarah—may I have just eggs? Father Tilford, you're not going to work today—in this weather? Well, I am too—for that matter. Any mail for me? Oh, Joan, what night did you decide on for the party? I must tell Philip to come. No," she called to Sarah, "no toast—just a roll. And eggs. I've got to skip right out. What's in the paper? Where's Pamela—little devil."

Louie knocked. "Car." He was wearing a different tie. He was swift, was Louie.

Joan walked to the street with her father.

"It's funny," she meditated, "how something can rise

inside and take hold of you. There are some things I want, and feel I can't have them here. Oh yes—important things. And so I do want to get away."

"I dare say these moods are caused by the shockingly casual way I've brought you up."

"You didn't bring me up casually. And this isn't a mood."

"Maybe."

"Perhaps I'm getting old."

He chortled.

"Oh, father! I love everything so much!"

Spring was crazily washing down the streets.

"If it's going to be a civil war," Mr. Tilford reverted suddenly, "I vote for the conservatives."

"Oh, sure!"

But she wondered.

IV

She was busy the next few days. First of all there were all these lists to make, of places to go, of things to remember, of people to see. She hadn't decided her itinerary yet; there was too much to choose from! She bought a lot of things—some stationery, a warm rug, some woolen stockings, several pairs of shoes, a mound of toilet articles. Maybe you could get Colgate's toothpaste in England, but she wanted to be sure.

In Mr. Powell's office at the bank she made final arrangements for her letter of credit. Her signature slips looked funny. Her handwriting was small and round and went slightly uphill. Then she had to visit her three final choices among steamship companies to assemble all their memoranda; before finally making up her mind she would consult her father.

Home in the afternoon, she tossed off coat and hat, and before the tall mirror passed her hand through her hair; she turned her head sideways upward, shaking her hair back. She went upstairs. She was wearing a tailored dress of dark tan silk with a V-neck bound by a thin piping of darker tan on the collar. There was a dull green monogram on the tie.

She was excited. She felt a fine private elation. She felt this excitement in such a manner that once upstairs she was very quiet and tranquil, almost immobile; she sat crouched in one of her big chairs, a little smile condensed on her lips. One of her hands clasped her chin, the other she rubbed slightly against the leather of the chair. Smiling, she bit her lip once or twice, in pleasure, in surprise at herself, in exhilarated expectation.

She was quiet a long time and then bounded up to get the atlas. She lugged it to her chair, balancing it before her so that the arms of the chair took part of the weight, then turned the pages slowly, poring over them. She lowered her head closer to see the fine print, to trace across rivers, mountains, valleys, frontiers, the individual letters which thus separated and strung out composed names. Such names! T-U-R-K-E-Y, for instance, with the T stuck over here in Europe, and the other five letters stretching like a bridge into Asia.

On this map there were many pleasant smaller names. She spelled out Chalcydon and Sardis, Ephesus and Trebizond. The last name challenged her attention and she slipped from under the atlas to pick up *The Ton-Ves* volume of the *Encyclopædia*. Tom Thumb, Topography, Trade-Unions, Transjordan, Trebizond.

Europe alone was her primary objective. She thought she'd spend the whole spring in London, and then proceed to Paris or perhaps Switzerland for the summer;

later obviously there would be a dip into Italy or Spain. She had decided to stay away a full year. She was just out of school, she had never been in Europe, and the obvious places must come first. Surely, then, she ought to wander eastward, too, see the sky line of Stamboul and the hill over Damascus where Mohammed paused. Such places might be disappointing. But—romance!

Hello! Trebizond was Colchis. That was the place where Jason sought the Fleece. She wandered a little; she let her mind sink back in retrospect to those days when she lay in bed, her hair a black square against the pillow, listening to her father read aloud all those legends, the story of Troy and of Helen, the stories of Perseus and Theseus, the story of the Golden Fleece. Her mind was carried back through the years, she thought of Agamemnon and Patroclus, of Achilles and Æneas, she remembered from a childhood haze old friends like Hector and Sarpedon. Oh! Surely she must see their towns!

So Trebizond was the home of Medea, the fastness of the Golden Fleece.

"I'll go to Trebizond," she whispered.

She went back to the atlas and slid through other pages. She had more or less made up her mind to sail two weeks from Saturday. Good! Hello! This looked interesting, this peninsula shaped like a flaming pheasant—Cochin-Chîne. But first—she started to smile—she must go to Trebizond. She would find a male Medea. She laughed, shivering a little.

V

After dinner that evening she told her father, "I'm going." She was abrupt and decisive.

"I gathered as much," he said quietly, helping her.

"Dad—you don't mind?"

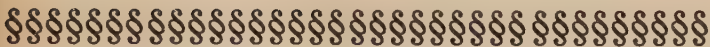
"My dear, I approve highly!" And of course she knew he was honest, he did approve, and was glad too, believing in self-reliance as he did, that she was going alone. Still, he must be feeling it rather keenly, the way he wouldn't talk about it much.

"I think I'll go to London first, father; that's all I'm really sure about. Should I take White Star or Cunard, d'you think? I'm an awful idiot, father. I ordered some stationery today—my name and a London address. Of course I won't be in London long. There's such a lot I want to see! No, I'm not going to take many things—a few books, that's all. Can you come with me to the bank tomorrow?"

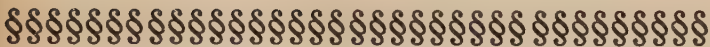
She did not mention Trebizond or the Fleece. That was private—even from him.

But seeing her father irresolute and moved, but inhibited himself from demonstrating any grief, she moved to him quickly and took his head awkwardly and affectionately in her arms. Kissing him, she said, "Oh, dad, I'm sorry to go if it hurts you—but I *am* going!" She then kissed him repeatedly, moving her head forward with each kiss on his cheeks, his forehead, his arms. "I'm going to have such a *good* time, father!" She kissed him both absently and passionately again.

Joan was terribly fond of Mr. Tilford; but such manifestation of emotion was very rare.



Chapter Two



I

MARK TILFORD was a lawyer. He did not address juries, but was one of those lawyers who are summoned when a bank is about to fail or a great corporation dissolve. Mr. Tilford was very calm and efficient on such occasions, and many companies are said to have fallen purely because of their delight in having him as a receiver. His offices contained rows upon rows of middle-aged gentlemen whose exclusive business it was to assemble data for him in preparation for such obsequies. The name of the firm was Tilford, Tilford, Tilford, & Tilford, and it was generally assumed it would last forever, and on Judgment Day submit a final brief to God.

The firm was founded by Mark Tilford's great-grandfather in a year altogether mythical to a contemporary American, in 1799. The great-grandfather was born in a year which is also mythical, but for a different reason, 1776. Then he and the firm lived in Philadelphia. From that time onward the Tilfords were not merely individuals; they were individuals because of and in the light of the firm. The old great-grandfather moved westward in 1820, and with him moved a son—a son named Jasper who lived a great many years and became eventually Mark Tilford's grandfather.

Why the old man and his old son Jasper chose Chicago was a mystery. It was hardly a village in those days. But Chicago received them, and the sign on a stockaded shack near what is now Dearborn Street read "Tilford & Tilford" even in that remote, almost paleolithic past. Thus the firm was older than Chicago itself—that is to say, a trifle over three Tilford generations, a fact which the firm never permitted itself to forget; and inasmuch as a Tilford generation is slightly longer than an ordinary generation, the firm condescended a little to Chicago throughout its long uninterrupted history. The first site of the firm—near the river and the fort—is 171½ yards from the present site on LaSalle Street, the present site being a forty-story sky-scraper shining in steel and stone and frosted glass; this was a fact not unneglected in Tilford publicity. Publicity is not the correct word. Naturally the Tilfords didn't advertise themselves. But everyone else did it for them.

In oval-framed steel engravings the likenesses of the old great-grandfather and of Jasper, his old son, looked down on Mark. It was incredible to Mark that Jasper ever could have had much youth; surely he had been born old, of tired if sturdy loins. Age ran in the family. All of them lived immense ages and procreated their children late. This did not occur in regard to Mark himself, however; he was only 30 when Joan was born. But then several divagations and iconoclasms occurred in Mark's life and broke the tradition in him. But he was a Tilford nevertheless, and in his office the oval portraits took honored place.

There was an idiosyncrasy about Jasper. He drank. Nevertheless, he lived to be almost eighty. He was the son of the great-grandfather by a Kentucky woman. No one remembered much about her; for several generations,

in fact, the women of the Tilfords were comparatively unimportant. But Jasper thought his father's example a good one, and he married a Kentucky woman too. After several years of dutiful matrimonial activity she died. The next year Jasper married another Kentucky woman. They came buxom from that state. Jasper continued to drink, to remember Henry Clay, and to contemplate successive marriages with Kentucky women. But the second wife delivered him a son and did not die. The son was named Haviland. Meanwhile Chicago grew and the firm grew. It reached a new stage—Tilford, Tilford & Tilford.

The son Haviland became Mark Tilford's father. There seems to be a generation missing, but only because the Tilfords were so unreasonably long-lived. They were spare and hard, they said—Yankees. Joan learned early she was a Yankee. Jasper lived from 1801 to 1879, and Haviland was born in 1827. It took Haviland a long time to find a Kentucky woman because his father insisted on approving of them first experimentally; and Haviland did not marry until his fifties, when his father, too old for serious research, slackened the paternal rein. Mark was born in 1872. He was out of Harvard in 1894, and was received into the firm in 1897. The firm had become Tilford, Tilford, Tilford & Tilford.

Old Haviland was an eccentric character. All the other Tilfords lived long enough, but Haviland simply did not die. He lived to see Mark married, Joan born, Pamela born; he lived through twenty presidential terms; he remembered cloudily Dred Scott and John Brown; he fought (of course) in the Civil War; he remembered all three American presidents who have been assassinated; he lived till 1907.

Haviland was not a drinker, but he had other con-

siderable vices. For one thing, he had seven beds. He would wander from one to another during the night, sleeping an hour or two in each. Insomnia, the doctors called it. For another, he was very religious. That is, possessing an overwhelming knowledge of the Bible, he used it before all-comers, mostly transmuted into splendid, dazzling profanity. Haviland stopped going to the office rather early in life for a Tilford—at seventy-five.

The firm was the great link in the family. As much as blood, the firm counted. For three generations it had been handed down, father to son; it was accepted as a permanency not merely by the Tilfords, but by Chicago itself. The legend was that it would last eternally. Eventually it would become Tilford, Tilford, Tilford, Tilford, Tilford, Tilford, Tilford, & Tilford, and so on to the end of things. But this did not happen. The succession stopped. Mark Tilford did not have a son.

II

He drove downtown and usually was at work by a little after 9. He worked steadily until 1:30 or sometimes later, but seldom came back to the office for serious work in the afternoon. For many years, after luncheon at the Union League, he had scarcely varied his routine: upstairs to read in the library for an hour, then telephone calls and sometimes a visit to the office; then a walk as far as Lincoln Park, finally a taxi home. Sometimes Joan came downtown and took him out to tea. Those were fine and special days.

This morning, arriving at his office, he found all his gray-haired gentlemen sitting quietly, and smiling as he came in; two junior partners dodged into his office with a cheery hello; outside in the big room the young men

and the stenographers smiled; they always smiled, as he walked past. He did like these people. They were his people. He hadn't discharged anyone except for overt cause for fifteen years; he chose his men carefully in the first place. And they did like him. There were a dozen who would die for him.

Mr. Tilford thought this comfortable thought a moment; he relaxed first and then went through his mail; after the mail there was this Pennsylvania case which was distracting him. He looked at the calendar to note a date next week: today was March 27. He tautened. March 27. That was Rosalind's birthday. He relaxed again, and his lips softened a little in memory. Rosalind!

By Jove! There was some one who had died for him.

III

Old Haviland had a way with him when he wanted things done. When Mark finished college, he wanted him to marry. But Mark was not at all sure he wanted to marry so soon. Still, old Haviland had a way with him.

The girl was named Rosalind Allen and came from Virginia. Virginia was not Kentucky and old Haviland sniffed suspiciously. Other things, however, were triumphantly in her favor: she was the daughter of a friend who had fought on the other side during the war, a friend whom he had met in prison in Jacksonville. She was beautiful; she had money and family. He sent Mark down to Virginia after Harvard to see Miss Allen, and then a strange thing happened, Mark fell in love with her. He had not known many girls. This one with her feather-slightness, her mist of purple hair, bewitched and enchanted him. But probably he would have married

her, love or no love; in those days he did everything his father suggested, without much thought, without deep question. He was quite capable of meeting, kissing, and marrying a girl as one might write, seal, and post a letter. But he loved Rosalind. From the first moment. And so it was done.

Mark was never quite sure that she loved him. She took seven long months to make up her mind to marry him, and later he was inclined to think her father, too, may have exerted pressure. Colonel Allen also had a way with him. During those seven months she was tantalizing, thrilling, alarming, forbidding. She was perfectly capable of summoning him all the way from Chicago and announcing on his arrival that she was dreadfully sorry but that she had suddenly arranged to leave town for a week's house party—with some one else. She did not lead him on; she was quite indifferent. But she was an entirely fascinating woman in whose character was a certain carelessness. And she rode his dreams.

But in the end they married and moved into the old Tilford house on Rush Street. It was an indescribably dreadful house, in which the Tilfords, somehow, had lived since middle-Jasper; they liked to think of themselves in periods. The house was of frame, gable-roofed with red shingles, consisting exclusively of large, barren, dusty, empty rooms; it was in a neighborhood once fashionable but then in decay, destined to be fashionable again in the rosy 1920's when the boulevard cut through. Then it was dog-eared. Little puffs of dust beat up from the narrow-lathed floors. The house was six stories high, and for every necessity it was somehow essential to traverse all six. It was heated by a furnace which ejected hot blasts of air through open floor radiators. There were

eight beds in the house—seven for old Haviland, one for Mark and Rosalind.

Exactly three weeks after they moved in she ran away. About three months later she returned.

Old Haviland advised against taking her back, but Mark loved her. But ever after, for almost seven years, every time she went out shopping and stayed an hour too long, he was sick with apprehension, sick with the thought she might be leaving him again. She did, once. Only for a month that time. But that time it was with a man, and a man whom Mark never forgot and hated with an intensity which shook him. The man's name was Hugo McQueen. An absurd name. Proud and shy, Mark never talked about him, least of all to Rosalind; but he did knock Rosalind down. That was sensational. Thereafter for a little time she was in love with him.

Rosalind did love Mark, though; she loved his humor, his gentleness, his fastidious good heart. He was a good man. She knew that. But she was a woman supple and avid—she had a very short upper lip raised over white, sharp teeth—and goodness was not enough. After marriage Mark discovered another thing—apparently she had been born without health. She was one of those curious, numerous American women of tender breeding and intense emotional energy who have no stamina. She had vitality, but it flickered. What she had she used quickly, and it was Mark's tragedy he did not always gauge such moments and meet them. People said of Rosalind that she was always sick. They said she voluptuated over the corpse of her health. This was not true. But it was true that she was seldom well.

"I'll die if you make me have a child," Rosalind said.

Mark knew she was truthful. The doctors did not help. Organically there was nothing wrong; the difficulty was

something quite different, a too-liberal and too-urgent burning of a rare vitality. For two years they were extremely careful not to have a child. Old Haviland gathered through his deaf ears that something was wrong and he did not improve matters by his questions; that was when Rosalind ran away another time. The departure was provoked incidentally because she decided to move their bedroom to the second floor. So many stairs! Old Haviland did not approve, the second floor being all his.

In 1903 Joan was born. She was an Accident. It was a curious thing to Mark much later, when he watched her swim for instance, or talk about her eager plans for school, or express with peculiar vivid actuality her impulses and desires, to think back and remember she had been an Accident. What was more, she was an Error. Joan did not learn this until much later. It hurt her. But it did not hurt her as much as it hurt her mother. Mrs. Tilford bore Joan through a torpid summer and a dusty wind-shaken autumn, and the only thing that kept her alive was the certainty—of course!—that the child would be a boy. Mark irritated Rosalind to frenzy that year, but that year she loved him. She knew how badly he wanted a son. Then Joan came. Tilford, Tilford, Tilford, Tilford & ——?

Haviland snorted. A Virginia woman.

IV

Two and a half years later Pamela was born. She was neither an accident nor an error. Rosalind was a curious girl and she would have been puzzled to have had to explain just why she did decide, even if it did kill her, to have another child, and in fact Mark remembered one bitter, touching scene; yes, she thought she would die;

yes, she *would* bear him a son!—anyway. Mark did everything in his power to dissuade her. He wanted a son, of course, but at this time neither paternity nor the specter of old Haviland mattered a snap of his fingers as against Rosalind and her health; he implored her not to risk her life a second time. Mark had always loved her; after Joan that love burned upward to obsession. But perhaps his protestations more than anything else held her stubbornly to her course. The more he pleaded the more resolution hardened in the secret darkness of her mind. Rosalind was amazingly cross-grained, and did most things by contraries; it warmed her vanity to be contrary; her disturbing loveliness was lovelier perverse. Mark grew into a tolerably wise man, but he never felt he actually did know why she bore Pamela; he could not believe, as he believed at first, that spite had moved her, spite against herself of course—desire to punish herself. But there was certainly no sentimental fondness for him in her decision, nor remorse; perhaps, because she knew how fair he was, she wanted to square accounts in some obscure way, and give him in paternity what she could not in entirety give him in herself. And there was one scene in which she appeared to *want* to die, to burn herself out in one final gesture out of which would come life. Anyway, Pamela was born.

But after Pamela it was quite obvious there could never be another child.

v

When Joan was four she overheard a scene. She couldn't help overhearing it, her granddaddy talked so loud, and her father so loud too in answering him. Haviland was almost stone deaf in the bad ear then.

"What did ye say, Mark?"

"Rosalind is dead."

"What did ye say? Speak louder, son. I can't hear ye."

"Rosalind died tonight, father."

"What?"

Mark's voice, shouting, broke. "She's *dead*, father. Sshhhh!"

"Dead? Who?"

"Rosalind."

Silence.

"But ye haven't got no son, Mark."

"I know."

Until that moment Mark himself had hardly given up hope.

The father's bluish hand, trembling a little, came down on Mark's shoulder. Like Joan later, he couldn't bear to be touched in sympathy; he moved away.

"Dead?"

"Yes."

"Well, Mark, seems like you'll have to be marryin' again."

Joan did not understand all the words, but she knew in general what they meant. Their voices were *so* loud.

VI

But Mark did not marry again. He sold the old house, wisely keeping the property; and years later the house went down and rose again. It became three hundred little houses, and stretched upward twenty stories. "Somehow good may come of this pain after all," Mark thought, and put the property in trust for Joan and Pamela.

He took his two infant daughters and found a nurse for them. He left the office to his competent young assistant Payton, and lost himself traveling for a year.

He came back to Chicago, greeted his father coldly, and found Mrs. Pomeroy, a cousin by an obscure inner relationship, to take care of the children. Old Haviland did not understand these changes. Unwise to the ways of rash and impetuous youth (Mark was thirty-four), he was unhappy. And what was the lad doing—organizing railroads! These young bloods! A strange son from his loins.

But what a delightful granddaughter! Haviland took long carriage rides with her, and observed from his gaunt height her compact, barelegged figure; he liked to feel, too, her fingers on the back of his hand, touching the grapeshot ball just visible under the drawn skin. Old Haviland died very peacefully, a summer day in 1907. He was a strong man, the doctors said.

Mark buried his father and then breathed. And now a great share of his life must go to Joan. He loved Pamela too, but for years the fact that Pamela killed Rosalind did not altogether leave his mind. Joan, like Pamela, grew up healthy—a lithe little girl with a deep fall of dark hair down her back when Mrs. Pomeroy permitted it to grow. Their father's body was in them and they were spare, clean-limbed children. Mr. Tilford tried not to spoil them. He was stern. Meanwhile, what would it do to them, this complex and cross-grained heritage, the capricious, trembling fire from their mother and the rocky stubbornness of old Haviland?

It took Mark a long time to forget Rosalind.

VII

This blustery March afternoon Mr. Tilford fingered through the papers in the library, and toward four o'clock decided he would return to the office for a bit.

He did not think of those early difficult years often; he did not permit himself to nibble among them often.

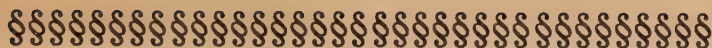
He reached the office and finished a few final details in the Pennsylvania case. Tomorrow he would have to go to court, which was a nuisance; like any good lawyer, his business was to keep cases out of courts. He thumbed through his papers, found his mind inattentive. Joan was right, he *had* been worried.

He thought fleetingly again of Rosalind. Ah, but it was so long ago, so many weary years ago! Eighteen years now since her death—nineteen years.

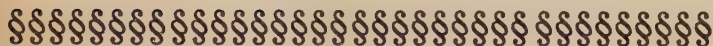
His lips came together and he picked up his private phone. Yes. He had made his decision.

He talked into the phone.

"Yes. Miss Jacobsen, please."



Chapter Three



I

"SEE that house?" Mark Tilford had pointed, eighteen-odd years before. "Well, go through it and master every living detail of it."

The architects did so. They were with Mr. Tilford before Haviland's old bailiwick near Rush Street.

"Now," said Mark, "I want a new house, and I have only one instruction—make it a house absolutely different from this one. That's all. Good morning."

Later Mark told old Haviland he was moving. The architects, given such freedom, did their job well.

Thus the spare, sunny house in which Joan had lived for eighteen years and was now to leave.

II

Shortly thereafter had come the importation of Mrs. Pomeroy. At that time she wore sweeping long dresses and hats a yard wide, hats which doubled back on themselves in long curves and came to rest under a white bird's wing. She was (then) a somewhat portly woman, and it took two maids half an hour every morning to lower her into her corsets, like a battleship being wedged to dry dock.

Mrs. Pomeroy went into the nursery to look at her charges. Mark was in the background, hovering.

"They shall be modern children!" she proclaimed. "I shall see to it myself. In the forefront! The very vanguard!"

Thereafter Mrs. Pomeroy led them onward for eighteen years, the banners of her soul unfurled.

III

The governess was named Miss Bagehot and Joan never forgot her, chiefly because of a remarkable gold-rimmed hole in one of her front teeth.

"No, you mustn't say 'Gee'."

"What's wrong with 'Gee'?"

"Well," hesitated Miss Bagehot, "it's short for Jesus, and we don't talk about Jesus much, do we?"

"My grandfather did," said Joan.

The first teacher was named Miss Dalrymple. Joan couldn't remember how she looked. But at the school they played ring-around-the-rosie and learned to spell with big blocks. Miss Dalrymple also opposed "Gee."

"Joan, you can talk about Jesus all you want to, but not as a swear word just yet," her father said.

At this time she was all enormous blue eyes and straight knobby legs with brown stockings halfway to her bare knees.

"Always do what you want to do, Joan, just so long as it doesn't hurt other people or your own self-respect."

"What's self-respect, daddy?"

"It's something that keeps you keeping your engagements."

At night it was worse. Mrs. Pomeroy would put them to bed.

"I wish I had a mother," Joan would say. "Gee!"

IV

When her father left in the morning he waved good-by from the corner with a fan of papers in his hand. He kissed her good-by and smelled a little of tobacco and of egg. When he came home at night she waited for him at the corner, having carried with her a small chair; there she sat solemnly under her hair till his automobile came in sight.

"Been busy, Joan?"

"Uh-uh."

Sometimes she waited for him behind the big, iron-grilled door, leaping at him as he arrived. "Ambush," he called it.

"Look I have a new book and some blocks!"

That was the precious hour, on the floor with her father in the nursery, until seven o'clock came and time for bed.

When he kissed her good night he smelled a little more of tobacco but the egg smell was gone.

V

Caroline had a squirrel tail of hair loose down her back, bound at the nape with an amber pin. For a time they took walks together and Joan told her a good deal about the way Saladin compared to Robin Hood and what it meant to be simpatica.

"Oh, Joan, I do like you so awfully!"

It was a damp, hot, breathless day; Joan felt there was a tension between them.

"I like you better'n any girl I know and better'n any boy too," Caroline said.

Joan scowled.

Caroline leaned over and kissed her.

"Stoppit!"

Joan's lips almost disappeared, and then she opened them a little and with her fist rubbed the lips where the kiss had been. She pushed Caroline first and then hit her and kicked her. Caroline tumbled onto the gravel, and Joan kept kicking her.

"Aaan-n-n-yah!" bawled Caroline.

Miss Bagehot came running up.

"You're a queer girl, Joan," Miss Bagehot said.

VI

Sometimes she and Pamela talked before they went to sleep.

"Do you think maybe I'm too pale to wear blue?"

"You're purty pale."

"I can wear sumpthings that are blue."

"I'm pale too," stated Pamela, proudly.

"Well, you're only a kid still."

"I wish there was a war," Pamela said.

"Why?"

"Is it true grampa had a bullet from one?"

"Oooh yes!"

"I wish I'd known grampa. He musta been nice."

"Father didn't like him," Joan said.

"Well, maybe. D'ye remember mother?"

"Sure."

They paused, but Joan volunteered nothing. Her mother—that was one of the things she couldn't bear to talk about.

"What're you going to be when you're grown up, Jo-an?"

"Why, I don't know."

This had never occurred to her and suddenly she was curious.

"Maybe a farmer in summer and an artist in winter," she said.

"I'm goin' to be an engine-driver," Pamela averred, "in a war."

Such intimacy was rare; they tasted it.

"Gee! Don't you wish you were a boy, Jo-an?"

"Un-unh," Joan shook her head.

"Why not?"

Joan hesitated. She knew. Could she express it?

"Why not?" repeated Pamela.

"Well, maybe because girls can have a baby some day and boys can't," Joan finally said.

"I want to be a boy, anyway," Pamela concluded.

"Well, g'night."

They both felt tired.

"G'night, sleep tight, don't let bedbugs bite," said Pamela.

"Now I lay me down to sleep; I pray the lord my soul to keep."

Such prayer was ritual. They did not learn others.

VII

Her aunts and cousins had discovered things about her which they called "characteristic."

One was the way she would disappear for hours at a time and be discovered at a remote end of the beach, sitting curled against a tree, intently staring. Sometimes she had a book with her and when she read her head was

lowered into the book. Whenever she finished a good book she looked excited and flushed, and as if she had a secret. Often, however, she sat curled on the sand or crouching behind the tree without a book, intent, not pensive, poised.

They discovered, too, that she was intractable toward overtly expressed discipline. Her father was away in Washington once. Joan and Mrs. Pomeroy came to a crisis. They both forgot later what the crisis was about. But Mrs. Pomeroy remembered for a long time how Joan looked as she strode hatless out of the house, her long legs marching. She was away a whole day. Late in the evening she returned, her lips a little tremulous, her legs still marching. "I've come back," was all she would say.

She refused comfort, but sobbed alone in bed.

VIII

"I'll drive you home myself," Mr. Tilford suggested.

"No." Joan shook her head.

"I'll be late downtown, and pick you up on the way home."

"Well, no, father."

She had just said she'd be late Wednesday; there was a freshman-class dinner, and after it a debate.

"Why not, infant?"

"Unh-unh."

He noticed she was blushing.

"I insist on calling for you. I am your father."

"Dad, don't be silly."

He laughed, but she didn't laugh.

"Really, it won't be any trouble for me and we won't bother Louie. We can take a taxi. I'll buy you a sundæ on the way home."

"No, father."

It dawned suddenly on Mr. Tilford. 'This child!

One of the things Joan loved about her father was that he understood things so quickly. Now he pretended to be solemn and impressed and left her alone almost at once; but not obtrusively. Then later when they kissed each other good night they laughed with their eyes and then broke from the kiss laughing. It was safe then for banter or even for serious talk.

"Don't tell me it's Mr. Moody!"

Mr. Moody was the only teacher Joan hated. He taught zoölogy and was always prowling around zoos and had a fierce, bushy smile.

"His name is Archer and he has long trousers," Joan said.

IX

First the car drove straight through interminable miles of golden corn, lapping close to the wavering road; then it bisected the flat grayness of prairie for more interminable miles, and became not so much a suffocation in beauty as an exhilaration.

Joan grew half an inch that summer, and then began to pray she wouldn't grow any more; still, she wasn't too tall—just capably tall. Something happened to her throat; it became very soft where the long muscles climbed separating from the collar bones. She bobbed her hair. It was a shaggy square mass.

They saw the canyon first at sunset. They stood on the brink and watched the red dusk descend. It made her cry. Later they drove across the great loops of road up from Los Angeles toward Frisco, and at the top, where

there was snow and sunshine and a rainbow dipping down the valley, she cried too.

Up in Glacier Park they saw snow mountains for the first time at really close range; and again hating herself for this weakness, she somehow could not bear this beauty.

They found themselves behind schedule in Wyoming, and at Cheyenne shipped the car home. They boarded the Overland limited and were in Chicago in twenty-seven hours. It was fun getting into a train again, with a compartment all to herself, and long hours watching the track unreel from the observation platform, and dinner under the rosy light at the quaking table, watching her father's hands.

They were back the day before school.

"It's going to be a great year," smiled Joan.

X

Midway through high school she went out on a geology field trip. She walked ahead with the young instructor in the Indiana country behind the dunes; the sun fell and in sudden darkness they found they were lost. Joan liked the young instructor very much and it was fun to see what an adventure they were having. They had no place to sleep and certainly the last train had left hours before.

They searched and found a hut. Cutting a sheaf of brushwood, they filled the fireplace and kept the room dancing and bright. They told stories for a time and then Joan rolled in his overcoat to one side. There had not been many sandwiches left and she was very hungry, but soon she fell asleep. They reached their party by noon the next day.

That was a fine thing about people she liked—her fam-

ily, for instance. They understood so perfectly, they understood *her* so perfectly, never saying a word, and, what was more, never indicating that any word need be said. Of course she *had* done rather a foolish thing. But she shrugged. She knew herself.

XI

Her school made her pretty sure about much in her orbit, but even so there was a good deal left unexplained. Some of the girls thought she was an awful innocent. They broke up conversations laughing when she came around. Naturally, she knew ever so much more than they did; she had read. But she was very private with her knowledge.

In her mind often still were dreams: she dreamed of tall youths made supple by her smile, of knights on horseback carrying her to some sharp tracery of trees, of red-garbed prelates and the smiles of bearded kings. Openly—in the clear daylight of actuality—she scoffed at these dreams. Nevertheless in slumber they remained.

But it did seem that reading about things wasn't everything. For instance, if you really did feel *terribly* about some one, what did you do? She pondered, scowling. Why, you got married—of course.



Chapter Four



I

ONE gray afternoon in the winter of 1924 Mr. Tilford had picked up his telephone idly enough. It was only 3:30 in the afternoon, yet the city was dark, with cold rain beating against the window-panes. He listened into the phone. "Oh yes. . . . What's that? . . . Tonight, at Orchestra Hall? . . . No—no—I'm too busy. . . . What? . . . Oh—well—perhaps I could manage it. . . . Yes. Sure thing. I'll come." Mr. Tilford was fond of music. He was almost a specialist in the sonatas of Beethoven. His friends twitted him sometimes, because he liked opera, too, the noisier and bloodier the better, but they excused him, knowing this idiosyncrasy to be a relaxation. Tonight's concert, however, was quite another affair; it was the first time Hilda Jacobsen was playing in Chicago. "Sure thing I'll come," Mr. Tilford repeated into the phone.

Thereupon occurred the most sensational event in Mr. Tilford's life for twenty years. He fell in love.

II

She was a very good young violinist, and at this time people said that she might easily become a great violinist.

She was dark and had a boyish face with a sullen, spoiled, rather contemptuous mouth; she was slim, but not in the least fragile or feathery; she had taut, glossy, almost transparent hands. Every gesture with them was exquisite, and about all her movements there were an extraordinary delicacy and precision; that was what first moved Mr. Tilford after hearing her—he liked precise people. Her English was very slightly faulty. She was Danish, in age about twenty-eight.

Mr. Tilford liked her playing very much. He thought perhaps her execution in the upper notes was a little too emphatic, perhaps a little strident; but it was undeniable she had technique, intensity, and a flawless lucidity. He liked, too, the projection of individual personality, quite apart from her music, which she imparted coolly and gracefully to the audience. Her friends took him along to a reception after the concert. They walked down Michigan Boulevard in the dark. The shafts of tall buildings looked like Christmas trees. People issued before them, their faces blown like smeared bubbles in the wind.

Inside when they arrived it was very warm. The lights were secluded in corners. People tiptoed. Miss Jacobsen was aloof and formal at first, and a little nervous, but by midnight she had detached herself from the hungry ladies who made the pursuit of culture their business, and with Mr. Tilford and his friends and a few hovering younger men she laughed at her earlier trepidation; and by the time she played again, later, everyone in the group felt he was her friend. Mr. Tilford was shyer than she, and in their first tête-à-tête for several moments neither said a word. But with a feeling that he was diving into remote dangerous seas, he asked her to luncheon the next day. They were both surprised that she accepted.

She stayed in Chicago only two days, but before she left he declared himself.

She was rather moved, but refused him. "I'm glad you have asked me. But—no."

III

She returned later, staying in Chicago for almost two months in spring. At the end of the two months it was she who declared herself, and he who was forced to refuse. That was because as they came to know one another better their relations distinctly changed. Miss Jacobsen discovered she too had fallen in love. It was absurd, her friends said. He was a dull business man twenty years her senior. Her young artist companions were skeptical or scandalized. She was a little aghast herself at falling in love with a man who had almost nothing in common with her. As for Mr. Tilford, he was overwhelmed. "This is too unbelievable," he kept cautiously saying.

Mr. Tilford surveyed himself those few months and blinked at the apparition he saw. Here he was, active and vigorous, certainly, but on the downhill end of things; his life for fifteen years had been so regularly happy he had not seen the years slip by; he had his house, his position, his immense prestige—he had Joan. And now suddenly the very bedrock of his existence was exploding. He felt he stood alone with Hilda, and that the whole rest of the world was slipping irremediably away. He was over fifty; his life flowed in charted ways; his life was a channel over which he could look back with uninterrupted, clear perspective—but now ahead of him—what was coming? A whirlpool? A broader, smoother channel? Perhaps some Niagara of destruction and dismay?

When he came home and Joan was there, already he felt he lived an incredible, double life.

Miss Jacobsen came to the Tilford house several times, once at a dinner Mr. Tilford gave for some of his musician friends, once to luncheon with some of Joan's classmates, and of course almost immediately Joan liked her very much. Mr. Tilford watched them together warily, but apparently Joan did not guess that this guest was not an ordinary guest. Hilda had been extremely alarmed about meeting Joan, and was nervous at first, almost obviously uncomfortable; but Joan's vivid friendly admiration put her fairly soon at ease. Mark watched them, mentally staring. He watched himself. He was amazed at himself.

Mark and Hilda saw one another incessantly those two months, in the afternoons before her concerts, often for dinner, sometimes for long Sunday rides together; but they did not become lovers. Mr. Tilford refused to live with her. Perhaps the barrier was Joan; Hilda thought so and was violent in one bitter, painful scene. But even if he couldn't explain it so that Hilda—whom he loved—would understand, he knew with balanced clarity the reasons for his decision. There was a tradition in him. He was a Puritan. He could not disorganize his life openly, and he would not do anything furtive. From the very beginning he insisted on permanence. He tried to make it clear to Hilda that his own sophistication was something quite different from hers, but in a different way was quite the equal of it. He could not think in terms of mistresses. He thought of wives. All the women he knew, all his friends' women, were wives. It came as a profound shock to Hilda that quite truly Mr. Tilford had never met a woman who was a mistress in his life.

But Hilda wouldn't marry; for her marriage was simply out of the question. If he had his background, she had her career. If he wouldn't sacrifice what was behind him, she couldn't sacrifice what was before her. She saw it simply too. She loved him and wanted him. Let them live together. That was her proposal; and it seemed to her quite as unreasonable that he should reject it as he thought it was unreasonable of her to refuse his plea for marriage. Hilda had certain ideas about marriage. Ach—never!

IV

For almost a year this impasse persisted. She was in Chicago only once, however, during this interval, and he was too busy to follow her—except for one quick bad-tempered trip—to New York or Detroit or Boston. But they lived in one another's minds. He found an increasing abstraction interfering with his work, and she wired him once to come—that she was on the verge of a complete breakdown. He could not come. Later she was in Chicago again.

"You don't, my dear," Mr. Tilford insisted, "understand the astonishing difficulties of this situation. I'm not a prig. Not in the least. But I'm clever enough to know that I'm not big enough to hold you if I only hold you piecemeal. It's got to be everything. I've got to *marry* you! I want to take you in my house and we shall live there—and it will be your house. This is definite, Hilda. If you won't marry me—good-by."

She had a flat in one of the new hotels built up on an elbow of land reclaimed from the lake near Chicago Avenue. Mr. Tilford usually telephoned in the middle of the afternoon, to see if she were free; then he would

pace steadily the mile from his office, and together they would have tea. Hilda's maid disliked him; but she did not speak English and he was only amused. There was an immense divan in the flat, a low rectangle rising direct from the floor and covered with silks, cushions, shawls.

There must be a decision soon now—Hilda opened the new season in Boston the 28th—she had only a few days more in Chicago.

"I think you do not think of me," she would say. "It is hard for me, Mark, wanting you and not having you. I am different from you in such things. You are always calm and that is one reason why I love you, but myself I am not calm. And all my life is in my music—you know that. All my life, anyway, till that evening I met you. I cannot give up playing. You would not desire me to do that."

And he would protest, of course, no such idea was ever in his head. She should have her music. But she should marry him. Let them live six months in Chicago every year; let her have her concerts the rest of the time. He could get away to join her. Europe?—certainly they could live part of the year in Europe. Joan? But what *about* Joan? Of course she would understand.

"I cannot see Joan with a stepmother her own age," Miss Jacobsen would say. "No, Mark."

There were times, however, when they spent peaceful afternoons together, watching the sun gild first the glancing ripples of the lake, then the slope of beach, and finally, before it disappeared, the buildings in the deep canyon shadows; times when she played for him and he watched her hands, bringing life to music; times when with her delicate perception she knew just when he wanted her cool hands on his forehead, and when her laugh bubbling over the tea-table, and when her lips sep-

arating exquisitely on his mouth. Sometimes too there were scenes. Mr. Tilford did not know many people with violent tempers. It made him blink, the day she smashed the big vase with the fuchsias in it.

Joan and Fay were having their party at the end of the week.

"You'll come, of course?" Mark asked Hilda.

"Of course—maybe."

And frightened a little on the way home, stirred and shaken, he would nevertheless murmur: "This is the correct campaign. This will win her."

v

Moody, constrained, happy in rare lucent moments, Mr. Tilford lived out the week. He was going to win. With cruelty to himself, he did not see Hilda for several days. Of course there was this damned Pennsylvania case on his list. What astonished him most in all these astonishing disturbances was the changed perspective which had come to his life: After all, did the office matter so much? What did the Tilfords matter?—Joan?—

He saw Hilda without illusions.

It was incredible to him, for instance, that any woman could be so careless. She never answered letters. She always forgot telephone numbers. Her desk was neat—on top—but what a morass of bills, notes, clippings, memoranda, letters, the exquisite carved drawers concealed! She was triumphantly extravagant. She wore shockingly expensive clothes and paid for them. He would pay for them some day! It hurt him—he felt like a boy again—when she told him of earlier love affairs. She was never on time for an appointment. She practiced four hours a day; the rest of the day, when no concert came at night,

she spent like scattering pennies. She was somewhat careless of other people's feelings, inclined to be illogical, and determinedly impervious to such items in Americanization as cereal for breakfast, movies, and exercise. She was sullen toward adverse criticism, and contemptuous of praise; it amazed him to discover how jealous she was of other musicians. She was often moody and often tired. She was not at all an admirable character.

"Jove!" Mr. Tilford kept thinking, shaking and nodding his head, meditating on these truths. "She's wonderful—wonderful!!"



Chapter Five



I

ARCHER had had not only long trousers, but a new and amazing Adam's apple, and was then shaving twice a week.

"Oh, sure I'd love to!" said Joan as casually as possible when he asked her.

Of course people would stare and maybe some of them would say she was his girl, but that was better than to be left out.

"Could we go to a dance maybe afterward?"

"No!" replied Joan, thrilled. "I mean—sure!"

Immediately she began to like Archer very much. He was attentive to her and she found his attention attractive. They were in several classes together and, since he lived in her neighborhood, often she brought him sternly home to tea; and very soon there were many dances and bus rides in moonlit evenings and solemn conversation at midnight before her door. She didn't share with him the things she really yearned for; she shared no really secret things, like Rupert Brooke, for instance, or a detective story called *The Teeth of the Tiger*, or the technique of the Australian crawl.

They were in Joan's car. It was a clear warm night, dark and without a moon. Twin furrows of light slid

forward from the headlights of the car, and in them she could see insects tumble and dance; when the car stopped, in the immense silent drone that followed she heard sharp rustlings of branches and a steady, almost ominous purr from the wind through the bending trees.

"You like me, don't you, Joan?"

"Of course."

Her fair pallid face drooped as her eyes shone.

"Listen."

"Yes."

"Listen."

Of course she wanted to kiss him and she would kiss him some day, but she didn't think she wanted to now. The world was lovely and tranquil, she felt peace, and she didn't want this peace broken and spoiled. Moods were precious and this was a very precious mood.

Some time before there had been a boy named Roger who had kissed her at a dance. She had been rather fond of Roger, but the kiss disappointed her. "I thought you cared!" he cried, when he saw her face. "Oh, I did! But that's what you don't understand!" Still, when she had returned home that night, she had thought, "The next time anyone kisses me I want him to put his arms around me."

Now Archer—she knew Archer better—Archer wasn't sentimental and she liked him.

"Do you know what I like about you, Joan—you're so diffrent."

She nodded.

"I wonder—do you know what you *do* to a fellow, Jo-an?"

She shook her head.

"I've always thought—about you— *Listen!*"

She listened.

Archer leaned over, awkwardly circling around to grasp her hand on the steering wheel; he tried to press her close and she instinctively stiffened; he kissed her. For a moment Joan was quiescent and silent, feeling her lips tentatively. A nameless resentment brushed her mind. He kissed her again and she leaned back and slapped him hard.

"Oh! I'm sorry!" She turned to him, her lips open. "I was wrong! Kiss me!"

II

The way you went into a school like that, a kid with a wide pink bow like a silk butterfly poised in your hair, and then out again four years later in a slick short skirt and silver slippers and a close shining bob! You went in thinking about Peter Pan and maybe Sherlock Holmes and wondering if the Cubs would win the pennant, and you came out smart and sure about everything, a little bored by Beethoven. Four years! Centuries! How old was she at Harper? Thirteen to seventeen—yes.

Remember how you played hockey with grinning passion, hair flying, snow-smudged, shouting? Then toward six it was time to have a walk before dinner, and after dinner you put up your hair and wondered how soon you could be wearing frocks just a shade shorter and filmier; then went with the juniors and seniors to their parties—and watched. Of course you went home early, you were only a kid, you didn't know what it was all about.

What had happened to all those classmates? In general her predictions had been quite correct. Since they were all of a set, and since she belonged to the set, she hadn't bothered to analyze its character; but about various personalities themselves she had been curious. Well,

there was Helen Chafee—yes—playing polo on the north shore—probably bound to marry at least once again. Chuck Gibbons had gone to Yale and won his Y in football, exactly like his father before him. Sammy Levison had followed his uncle in criminal law. If he had done anything else the world would have turned into a pumpkin.

Joan remembered all the mothers, most of them so startlingly alike. Mostly they had time for nothing except to join clubs, keep thin, buy bed lamps, discharge servants, and have, despite their doctors, an appendicitis operation regularly once a year. The fathers were better. She remembered some of the fathers very well, particularly those who, of course, were still always in the news; they comprised what was called civic spirit in Chicago and were always honorary pall-bearers together at important funerals.

Most of them lived in her own neighborhood at that time, along the upper shoulder of the city; they were moving north now, into Kenilworth, Hubbard Woods, Glenco. She remembered their houses, full of new laundry chutes and new Anders Zorn prints. They were all acquiescently Chicagoan and defiantly American. It had occurred to her, probably of the whole lot, mothers and fathers alike, Mark Tilford was the only one all of whose grandparents had been born in America.

They had been a terrifying lot—those children! Like babies with long beards.

III

Justine was half a dozen years older than Joan; she was a biggish girl with untidy blond hair which circled in loose disks, under her hat, over her ears. When she crossed

her legs in sitting down the upper thigh was outlined like a carrot. But she was beautiful.

"My name's Justine. You're a pretty child."

Joan measured her seriously. She thought her lovely.

"Have a cigarette."

"No. I don't smoke, thanks."

"Why not?"

"Well—why should I?"

"How old are you?"

"Sixteen."

"You look a little older. How do you keep your hair so bright? What a delightful dress that is!"

Ralph Palmer, Joan's escort at this dance, sauntered up.

"In love with that boy?"

"Love? No—rather not!"

Ralph wheeled Joan into the music. They caught a beat of the music and stepped into it, dancing. Justine laughed, and Joan wondered why, a drifting, bantering laugh. Joan thought, "She sort of purrs when she asks questions." Later they talked again, and Justine's conversation was direct. Joan evaded it.

"What's the matter? Want to talk about the weather? Afraid of me?"

Thereupon Joan fell in love with her for a week or two.

IV

Of course Harper wasn't just an atmosphere; it was a school.

The classrooms had movable chairs instead of desks, and not only blackboards, but colored charts covered the walls. She took regular classes in algebra and geometry and English, but also she dissected frogs in the laboratory, played tennis in the garden, and built up a structure of

history with colored cards. True, there were bells, recitations, and home work; but no examinations. Every morning the whole school from the five-year-old children in the kindergarten to the seniors in twelfth grade met in joint session, and boys and girls alike listened, say, to a jolly Frenchman sing songs, or to rehearsals of the high-school play, or to visiting authors recite their work.

They had plenty of classwork; they had to work hard. They learned no Latin or Greek, but an essential to graduation was an incipient command of two modern languages. There were field days questing birds and plants; earnest talks with teachers after hours in the class-rooms, cozy and warm like studies at home, done in pale-green wallpaper with comfortable chairs arranged as the teachers wanted them; work in the carpenter shop and work setting up type and editing the daily paper; plays and debates in which every student must take part; cross-country walks; and of course the library—such a library! Still, the library didn't keep them from that course in photography, taking pictures mostly of the birds in Lincoln Park, where the green lagoon was just a stone's-throw away. As to the teachers, they were splendid; that was Joan's only word for them.

"Why aren't there other Harpers?" she demanded of her father when she heard, later at the university, of other schools, different kinds of schools.

Mr. Tilford promised some day to build her one.

V

She and Justine went to the theater together, Joan rather clinging to her, vicariously exploring through her larger mind various interesting curiosities; Justine (Joan decided later) was a little bored, rather charmed, senti-

mental in memory of herself at sixteen, flattered at Joan's awareness of her beauty. They chuckled to one another between the acts. Justine excited Joan. Such a sophisticated person!

After the performance Joan went home with her, instead of going all the way back north to the Tilford house. She telephoned Pamela in explanation. Justine was amused to have her along; her invitation was casual and cordial. They took a Jackson Park "L" and reached Justine's flat; the flat was hot, small, and close, with steam hissing from the radiators.

"I want a little drink," Justine said.

"All right."

"Have some?"

"No thanks."

"Why not?"

Joan was always crushed before Justine's why not?

"It's good liquor."

"By the way—where are your people—family?"

"Wintering in California."

Justine poured. "Here's your drink."

"I'd rather not, thanks."

Justine laughed. "Baby Joan."

"Shut up!"

"Don't get sore," Justine smiled. "I'll bet you're afraid to drink."

Joan couldn't be dared. She picked up the glass and downed it. She spluttered a little and then felt warmth climbing down her throat.

"It's a capable body," Justine smiled, admiring her.

"Oh, shut up!" Joan protested.

"Why not talk?"

"I don't feel like it. Anyway I hate soppiness."

"Of course," Justine agreed.

Justine paraded forth through the hot room, not paying much attention to Joan; she discarded her clothes, dancing a little; her teeth were closed over a long cigarette-holder, the arc of which swooped in complicated loops and ovals as she continued to drift, bobbing, around the room. "Well," she said, "it's very damn late. I'm going to bed."

Joan had been so absorbed by the emotion she felt merely from being with Justine, that she had not counted on the reaction which came from being with her too closely. She was not frightened, and indeed there was nothing to be frightened about, but very suddenly she became uneasy. "I wish I hadn't come," she thought; and felt obscurely she was going to experience loss of some ideal. Of course it wouldn't be too late to go now; she could close her lips, be rude to Justine, and go. But that would be cowardice, surely.

Joan was on one side of the bed. There was only one bed, evidently. Justine, still smoking but without moving the holder from her teeth, crawled into the other side, the cigarette pointing upward. The darkness was hot and Joan's eyes hurt when she closed them. Justine expunged her cigarette.

"Good night!" Joan announced, turning her back.

This was the first time she had ever been in a bed with anybody. She didn't like it. She tried silently to edge closer to the bed's edge.

"Afraid of me?"

Of course Justine was just the kind of person who would say that! Still, as she said it she laughed, that pleasant, drifting, bantering laugh. Joan comprehensively tried to make herself comfortable. Thud-thud! went her heart. She was afraid to move for fear of rolling closer. Thud-thud! She wondered if Justine could hear.

"Good night."

Justine apparently was already asleep. Through Joan's mind a strange emotion coursed, telling her that no longer could she be Justine's friend. Why? She didn't know, exactly. But it seemed that Justine had noticed she was afraid of her, afraid of her in some remote, puzzling way which Justine understood perfectly, but which Joan did not understand; and that Justine would always have against her both knowledge of her fear and knowledge that she, Justine, had done nothing to incite it. Joan felt shame. She couldn't explain.

In the morning they were sleepy and friendly and Joan scoffed at herself.

But somehow she felt that Justine was a person with whom she shared an unwilling secret and if only for this reason she must avoid her.

VI

There was another evening she remembered; it must have been a little later, perhaps the last year at Harper. She was dressing to go out—every boy in the world was pursuing her those days—and flowers came. "Say, they're coral," Pamela pointed. "Look!" They were a corsage of sweet peas, with Ralph's card tucked within the tissue paper; and rather idly Joan pinned them to her dress. But then she looked at herself, startled. Ralph Palmer wore polo shirts and was her chief friend these days.

Something happened when the corsage was affixed. She had been a little contemptuous of this party; she wanted to finish a big difficult book called the *New Machiavelli* and by comparison parties seemed absurd. But not now. She walked to the tall mirror and stared at herself, genuinely amazed. The subtler shading of the

dress was made dramatic now by the flowers, and the flowers emphasized her blue-white eyes and the sturdy, lively face.

"Why, I'm going to have an awfully good time to-night!" she whispered.

Thereafter she felt she had learned something, because indeed she did have a good time; she had learned that if she felt a thing deeply enough herself, other people would feel it too. She was beautiful to herself. Therefore other people thought her beautiful. Of course it wasn't quite as simple as that. But somehow feeling herself lovely to herself she was happy, and happiness with others followed.

On the way out she leaned into the study and flew to Mr. Tilford. He held her shoulders and she knew that he too was moved.

VII

"Miss Tilford, you may read first."

That might be Mr. Smythe speaking, in her first class at ten o'clock. Mr. Smythe taught English. That is, he was a specialist in minor Tudor prose who helped out in the crowded autumn by giving the elementary courses, English 1 and English 40. English 1 was Composition; English 40 was Literature. In English 1 they wrote themes on "Why I Came to College" (exposition), "The Best Vacation I Ever Had" (narration), "A Room I Remember" (description), and, "Why City Life Is More Beneficial Than Country Life" (argument). In English 40 they surveyed literature from Bede to Stevenson. Mr. Smythe was not, himself, vitally interested in these topics. His students read their themes aloud in English 1, and in English 40 read poetry around the class; and that was

all. Sometimes he took themes home and marked them with idle comments like, "Your vocabulary is mean and poor but amply sufficient for the expression of your ideas." At this time Mr. Smythe was occupied with a research into certain of the influences of seventeenth-century architecture on the minor prose of the period, and occasionally wrote articles for the newspapers on that Utopia wherein a professor at a theoretical university would sit with his theoretical students under a theoretical tree, drawing diagrams in the sand.

"Miss Tilford, you may read next."

Joan scurried through the big double-columned book to find the place.

"The isles of Greece The isles of Greece Where burning
Sappho loved and sung Where grew the arts of war
and peace Where Delos rose and Phœbus sprung Eternal
summer gilds them yet But all except their sun is set."

"Next."

Martha Jordan, next to her, said:

"The Scian and the Teian muse The heroes harp the
lovers lure Have found the fame your shores refuse
Their place of birth alone is mute To sounds which echo
further west Than your sire's Islands of the Blest."

"Enough," said Mr. Smythe. "Next."

And so on. Of course she was out of Harper now. This was the University.

VIII

Fay was a small girl, not pretty, with unbobbed red hair; she had a wide mouth and frank, widely-set greenish eyes; she was full of freckles and her nose turned up. Her conversation was quick and low-modulated, a funnel

of quiet words pointed downward and outflowing; her voice was low but for emphasis she lowered it, almost whispering. She knocked at Joan's door during the first week, and opened the door, smiling, her bright head leaning in; only her red head with the big smile was visible in the darkness behind the door. From that moment they were friends.

"I have the cubbyhole across the way. My name's Fay MacIntyre. I'm Scotch. We have this end of the hall to ourselves. What's your name? Well, that's a good name, you sound American. May I come in? Heavens, no! I'm not a freshman. You are, of course. I've been here years and years—that is, one year. No, I don't smoke, thanks. You don't, either? Well then, why did you suggest it? Listen. Don't take *any* club till I get Arabesque to look you over. Of course you'll take any club you want; they'll all be after you. By the way, I'm poor—I work in the library—oh yes! Just the same—(you have rather divine legs, did you know?)—just the same, I'm not at all a worthy character. Heavens! *your* clothes! Rich but honest parents—I see!"

It took Joan fairly long, she remembered, to know Fay well, but the surface pattern of her life she explored quickly. She was a little older than Joan, born out West, in California; her father was a curious creature, a gambler, and everything he touched failed; yet he must have been an exceptionally romantic character. He was by turn poker professional, horse-race trainer, prospector, cigar merchant, circus impresario, inventor, itinerant journalist, saloon-keeper. He died of drink. Fay had lived, so she said, from bar to bar. Her mother was a splendid woman. They were poor. Fay's schooling had been so precarious as to be absurd, but she had managed a scholarship at the

university, and was earning her living expenses in the library. Fay opened entirely a new world to Joan. And in herself she puzzled and enchanted Joan. She was a hooligan; apparently nothing was sacred to her tongue, but underneath a number of things were sacred to herself. She never talked about them, but little by little Joan saw, embedded in her mind, what they were. One was work. Fay wrote. She wrote plays. Fay had had all manner of shocking love affairs. Joan was stunned. But Fay added that she was through with all such casual divagations now, and, although Joan was curious, Fay would not explain; when she wanted to be reticent, nothing could make her talk. Her usual easy banter, Joan found, was in effect a carefully assembled mask to conceal just how sensitive she was.

"Look here, have you fed tonight? Let's not go to Ida, it's so crowded and I don't like all these new girls with eye-glasses. We'll go down to Sixty-third. I know a nice cafeteria. D'ye know any people in the hall yet? I don't know many, myself—know them well, that is; they all seem to know me. Shy? Yes, I am, rather. Do you know, I was scared to death, coming in your room the other night. Why did I come in? Well, you were a new girl and probably lonely—besides I like people. Have you met Georgiana Misselwitz? What an insane name! Go ahead—change your things. I hate people who crawl in closets. Oh—must tell you—I've just decided adolescence is the age when a girl decides what sex she belongs to. Ready? That's a mess of books you have there. Are you really going to work in college? So am I—maybe. I say, do close that window there." She paused. "I have a bitch of a cold."

They survived, after the first year, the important ordeal

of meeting again after three months apart; they were friends forever; the world was good.

"It's going to be hard to manage, she's so proud," Joan pondered.

She wanted to bring Fay home, to live with them, when school was done.

IX

It was a pretty good school, she decided. At least work was put up to one frankly and one could take it or leave it; one wasn't coddled. She missed her family, but, since she went home every week-end—she was in the same city—she survived this loss. All of this section of the city was new to her; evidently these people depended on their I. C. locals just as she swore by her own precious North Side bus-line. She walked to the lake, glancing upward along the shore; twenty miles to the north was her house. From the west, puffs of wind beat out a thin smoke from the factories and stockyards. That was another Chicago world she had never even seen.

Very soon she began to feel she belonged. The girls in Arabesque were friendly. She knew she would stand out before long, and before standing out from a group it was first necessary to become an integral part of it. That charming dean—what was her name?—Mrs. Stone. And what a bellowing this French teacher was—used up his whole face to say an R. And the big room in the library, with the ivy climbing dusty windows; the walks at dusk along the row of fraternity houses, where the men sprawled in sweaters and flannels on the porches, sauntering, singing—these things were quite fine. Next to Fay she liked best among girls in the club that Flemish-

faced, tawny-haired youngster with the strange, delightful first name.

The next class after English was French, every day at eleven. They tumbled out of class, goloshes muddy, fur coats loose and open, their books under arms or in slick tan brief-cases. A second bell and the new class began. Theme-writing and literature were still dreams of a remote futurity in French; most of their class work was drill; for instance, on Johnnie One, Johnnie Two, Johnnie Three, the method adopted by Mr. Fleurot to demonstrate the correct position of the pronoun in *J'en-ai-une*, *J'en-ai-deux*, and so on.

At twelve every Monday was chapel, and on the other days gymnasium. How often she cut out them both! At twelve-thirty it was time to button the coat again, walk down the Midway, and have lunch in Foster or Ida Noyes, usually with Fay, sometimes with others from among her friends. She was free then till four, when she had one more class, Pol.-econ.; then from five till midnight her time was her own again. One only had three classes a day at Chicago, and, after the first year, had them only on four days a week; and in the last two years one could choose them pretty well by inclination.

Of course, she found quickly, Chicago was so civilized because primarily it was a graduate school; it had no great use for junior students. It was less parasitic (she argued it out with Fay) than most great American universities, less a succession of inner, pendant growths, less an institution ingrowing and inbred. Maybe it ought to have, as Richard Northway suggested, not sham-Gothic for its buildings, but one big Loop skyscraper. It rather succumbed, she remembered, to what was evidently a great American pedagogic principle, education by syringe—hypodermic education; one was inoculated with a subject

and thereby rendered free from it forever. But that wasn't primarily the university's fault.

English was best. She took seventeen out of her thirty-six courses in English. She tried to think back later what the others had been, and how difficult it was even to remember! Some history—yes—a good deal of French—a little science. She tried to take introductory courses at least in any number of things—geology and political science, biology and ethics. But somehow after a few years not much of them remained.

Of course there was Mr. Parr. He held her till she had taken every course in anthropology open to a non-graduate student. Mr. Parr had just come back from Java, and he had with him a model of the skull of *pithecanthropus erectus*. He had been in Angkor-Wat—and the stories he told! But aside from his shocking wit he gave them, as a sort of pedestal, some intimation of the cool austerity of science. What were her other courses that autumn? Wasn't it the autumn of Dr. Neville and the Renaissance? Yes! And of Mr. Flynn in English 5.

"I don't know just who my favorite poet is." Mr. Flynn—she remembered every syllable—leaned over the rostrum in an old brown suit, cigarette ashes smudged on the coat, grinning. He was the most brilliant teacher Joan met, and she found later the most profound. "Who is my favorite poet? You ask that, young woman, seriously? But what a question! Well, now, poetry is like tennis, isn't it, or baseball? You can't have a favorite poet any more than you can have a favorite sport. When I watch baseball, baseball is my favorite sport. When I watch tennis, tennis is my favorite sport. It's much the same with poetry. When I read Browning, Browning is my

favorite poet. And when I read Tennyson, Shelley is my favorite poet."

Dr. Neville was a short-sighted man with a stubby beard and rich laughter, and he knew everything in the world. This knowledge he shared with certain of his students in certain limited spheres. One of the spheres was Napoleon; another was the Renaissance. She came into the class sometimes fresh from hockey, sometimes sleepy and surly from the library, sometimes deeply preoccupied or contemptuous at large. She was contemptuous rather a lot, those days. But Dr. Neville was always the same. He paced short-sightedly up and down, his beard wagging, his laugh like cheerful organ music, and re-created for them a living shadow of the past.

"I like this school," she thought.

She would be sorry when the four years were up.

X

Nothing sentimental could make her cry. She hadn't cried sentimentally for years. But how astonishingly near tears she was once, walking with Ralph in the Skokie, when a scarlet tanager whisked like a rocket through the trees; how extraordinary it was that she would weep reading a poem called "Renascence," and after it a lyric named "Farewell to Astolat." Many smaller things could move her in this fashion. Something rose and quite tore her, watching, say, only a flock of gulls swooping like flying scimitars over the lake.

It took her breath, the way the moon was solid in the clouds, set like a pearl in a slowly moving cloud-bank; the way people walked down the Loop streets, with the trains howling overhead, the wind thundering in flat gusts through the cleft streets; the way Fay's face would change

suddenly, her eyes turning dark and liquid in affection. What was this business of beauty, that it could move her so?

Even at a football game—but then a varsity football game was one of the most beautiful things on earth—of course!



Chapter Six



I

WILLARD, Willard Bates, was a graduate student in embryology; he was going to be a doctor, and his Ph.D., just around the corner, deceptively waited. Willard had been badly shot up in the war and was one of those Americans to whom all life after the age of twenty-one is a progressively declining anti-climax. Like football stars, Joan thought. Of course Willard was trying to reach a climax now again. He was in love. With her.

He told her a good deal about the war, and her background suddenly enlarged; all she had remembered personally of the war were the bright uniforms at dances and her father's repeated trips to Washington, where he taught the government railroad law at one dollar per year. Now from Willard she learned that men were ground into bloody mud because staff officers misread their maps, that the first troops in an infantry attack were sometimes subject to fire from their own supporting, forward-creeping barrage. Before the war Willard had had a very quiet life; he was born in southern Indiana, in a small town, and had gone to school there and evidently his mother had influenced him strongly.

What a new sort of person Willard was! He didn't wear polo shirts like the others boys she knew, nor slick

back his hair; he wore stiff collars the top edges of which never quite met, and his very dark hair, brushed sideways over a narrowish head, was thick and disorderly. He had dark eyes, with the brows almost meeting on a narrow forehead. Of course he limped, but not badly. The other boys gabbled about proms and petting, but here was some one who worked—who had ideas and ambition and who knew what he wanted in the world. Of course he was a good deal older than the rest of them, he was awfully old, he was almost twenty-five.

Willard had faults, but, she decided, when she discovered how deeply interested she was in him, they were faults not of character, but of manner; in character he was almost too sterling. Keenly sensitive himself—Joan watched him—he was far too considerate with other people, and was shy and diffident, especially with girls; he approached everybody as if on tiptoe, with a disarming smile of apology ready. He was awkward physically, but somehow this awkwardness was attractive. He *was* attractive. Darn it, look at him! She wanted to hug that lean, brown, narrow face. He smoked a pipe always, smoking slowly and methodically, and said, "By George!" a good deal.

II

"Will you tell me all about *it* some day?"

Sensitive about his wound, he avoided talking about it. But after knowing Joan several months he told her the story.

"Only," he said, "there's very little to tell."

The gist of it was that getting hit felt like a kick and that there was a long limp to the dressing station at Belleau, six miles away.

"That's the trouble with modern war," he said. "You never know what it is that hits you."

"Like modern love," Joan laughed.

"What?"

"Nothing. I was only being romantic."

"Oh! Sorry. It was shell, by the way; no bullet could have made such a mess."

"I want to see," said Joan.

But in reality, getting fonder of him, she didn't want to see, and in fact that summer had literally to force herself to go swimming with him the first time. Then she felt prodigious relief because really his foot didn't look terrible at all, just gnarled and red; and pressure left her mind.

War was not all Willard talked about.

"You see," he would say, limping along that first year, "you know all about your liver and pancreas and so on—the ordinary liver and lights—at least I hope you do. But there are other glands; and I'll bet you never heard of them! There's the pituitary, which makes you fat or tall; the parathyroid; the adrenal; the thyroid itself—you have no idea how important they are—and then glands still more mysterious about which we know almost nothing. All of them are of such an infinitely complex nature that we have just begun to explore them—but we know that without them we die. Hidden, ductless glands."

"But glands aren't your job, are they? You're an embryologist."

"Yes, but I'm interested in everything else."

"Well, let's talk first about embryology."

"All right. Oh, sorry I spilled that ash! Burn you? Embryology begins with the question, What is life? Life is extraordinarily hard to define. You can't define it antithetically, because death is by no means merely the

opposite of life. Death is the cessation of life. Well, that gives us an approach to a definition. Did you know, by the way, a bit of dead protoplasm weighs *exactly* the same as an identical bit of live protoplasm? Living or dead, it consists of *exactly* the same elements."

"What you mean is, life lives," laughed Joan.

"If you want me to go into it technically——"

"Of course."

"Well, protoplasm is a colloidal suspension in which may be found a dozen of the most common elements——" and shyly at first, soon enough warming, Willard would talk for a long hour or so. Almost always she was eager for more.

Then there were other things, too, which Willard talked about.

"Joan, I'm a crock. I'll never walk right even if I do have that other operation—and I can't dance. Imagine you not dancing!"

"I'd rather walk with you any time."

He was confused with delight.

"Well, I am a cripple, no getting around it, and I'm not a particularly brilliant student of medicine, and I have a year still before my degree. And after that Heaven knows how long before practice."

"But you're not going to practice. You're a research man."

"Anyway, it's a long time, even before research—and I do want ordinary practice first. I don't want to be like that fellow who diagnosed an obscure, leprous skin disease in a child—just because he had never seen a case of measles. That reminds me—by George!—you should see what Johnson has us doing now with those darned slippery frogs! And by the way, I have to go hungry for experiment seventy-two hours next week."

"We'll have a grand dinner when you're through," she said. "We'll go to St. Hubert's and I'll order the steak."

"But you're interrupting—rather I'm interrupting myself. What I'm trying to say is, Joan, I'm not much of a risk, you know that—but—that is, I mean —— Oh, hell!" He stopped. "Sorry."

Joan at this time was never sure whether she wanted him to go on with this subject or not.

Why, here was a personality! Besides, he did have nice eyes.

III

Pamela was at a stage. She was wild-hearted, rebellious, disorderly, surly, impertinent, scornful, and extremely lovable. She had followed Joan to Chicago, and loathed it; in classes they were a year apart. "Well, why did you come here to school, then?" Fay demanded, after one passionate declaration of protest.

"I didn't want to go East, I couldn't fancy being just with girls," Pamela said.

They were in the same hall, and occasionally Pamela drifted in to sit on the bed while Joan, before a mirror, changed her clothes for a party. Pamela was rather less popular than Joan. "Who going out with?"

"Ralph," Joan said, patting her dress, busy with a strand of hair straying from her bob.

"You see an awful lot of him."

"No, not so much as before —— Anyway, I like him." Joan turned toward her sister. "Why?"

"Oh, just curious," Pamela said.

Joan was busy with the strand of hair again.

Fay had to take a hand once. That was when Pamela

refused to join Arabesque; for a younger sister not to join her senior's club was, of course, high scandal. Fay got her around.

"Well, Arabesque is the best club, anyway," Pamela finally agreed, "All right."

"What a girl!" muttered Fay, when it was over.

But Pamela dropped Arabesque—another scandal—halfway through school.

But the trouble with Pam was the same thing that had troubled Joan for months two years before, this infernal business about boys—this shocking, humiliating knowledge which their elders called so smugly the double standard—what a vile phrase!—this apperception that boys could do things that girls couldn't do, and that boys did.

IV

Joan yawned. It was very late. Fay was half asleep across the room, although the light still burned; now Joan put down her book, twiddled the light button, and relaxed in darkness.

"When you find a man you can read in bed with," Fay murmured, sleepily, "marry him."

Joan thought suddenly of Willard. Marriage. They had been good friends for longer than a year. No.

V

Some people laughed at them. That didn't matter. People who counted approved. Look at Mr. Flynn and Mrs. Stone—they not only approved, but they came. Joan didn't remember who first suggested that Sunday group—probably Fay—but she recalled most of the friends who

composed it, what they read and how and where. She brought Willard along. He protested; he said he was a medical man. She said literature was good for him, and, anyway, she wanted his company. Fay said, Sure, being a medical man was all right; he could explain them things.

They met every Sunday night and read aloud. They were all in a good English class—Mrs. Stone on modern English verse—and it saved time to read through their work together. Circulating every Sunday evening among their various houses, they set up a routine and a schedule, and for a year hardly missed a Sunday. They began with poetry, progressed to plays, and finally read anything. The circle outlived by many months the class it was first supposed to feed.

After reading two hours or so, they sat on the floor and talked; toasted marshmallows in the fire; played parlor games like patience pounce and loved them; then at the end piled into automobiles and drove off to the waffle shop on 53rd or Alex's at the 55th street I.C. station, there to consume ham and eggs and hot black coffee, talking till late, often deeply into the morning. Joan and Fay were together always. Willard listened at first, talking hardly at all.

They didn't read only contemporary poems and plays, and Joan recalled how dazzled she had been to discover, for instance, Morris and Browning. What a magnificent poem was "The Defense of Guinevere!" And how magnificently Mr. Flynn read it the night he came to her house with the group! As for Browning, if any modern poet had sense enough to think of comparing a tulip to a blown red bubble of blood, why, he'd make a whole poem of it, he'd make a volume of it—not stick it casually in

the middle of a long narrative. One of the best evenings came when Fay, in her fluent rise-and-fall little voice, intoned, among modern poems, "Punch" and "The Jig of Forslin"; another when Willard dropped in with the Prufrock poems. There was the night, too, when some one brought a slim volume called *A Few Figs from Thistles*; those sonnets excited one like wine. She must have heard "The Old Ships" for the first time one of those evenings. And she never forgot the transition in war poetry from Brooke to Sassoon and Wilfred Owen.

Of course it was inevitable that in reading plays they should act them out. Almost at once they had a little theater and Fay took charge of it. They played out Dunsany, Schnitzler, and a great miscellany of modern one-acters; a fair amount of Shaw (here Willard read the prefaces; he said they were medical); and they discovered O'Neill. Then they tired of plays, and one evening blew up—it was the only word—reading parodies. "The Christmas Garland" sent them to "Seven Men," and then indeed the group was in danger, for no one would read anything unless it was by Max Beerbohm. Still, they managed to get in that one evening with the Masefield narratives, and another going through all of Sandburg.

VI

Willard was not happy those days. Joan would think back and feel a little glow of guilt—"Gee!" But it wasn't her fault. She couldn't help it if he fell in love with her. For a long while she maneuvered so that he would not declare himself since, if he did, of course she would have to refuse him, and she didn't want this neces-

sity of decision; she didn't want to lose his friendship simply because he—obviously now—wanted to marry. And it was dreadful, he wanting to kiss her, and she not cold, but simply negative. Luckily, for a long time, understanding pretty well her feeling, he had refrained from formally, in words, declaring himself. Perhaps he never would. He had never even said, "I love you." "Lord!" Joan whispered to herself, "I hope he never does." She didn't want to lose Willard!

They talked guinea-pigs. Willard told her the immense, fantastic story of the duplication by the human embryo of the whole life-cycle of the human race; how the embryo was in turn amphibian, reptile, fish, bird, in tune with geologic episodes: something pulsing in time to the generations, on precise proportionate scale. Willard's Ph.D. was not far away now. They talked about Europe. More and more Joan wanted to get away, and she was thinking seriously of insisting that her father come abroad with her in summer. But he was *so* busy! Willard had had six months in England returning from the war, convalescent, learning to walk again, studying; also a visit to Italy, a turn through Spain. "Yes, that's what I'll do," Joan said, brightly. "Just as soon as school is over, go to Spain, father and I." And of course, just because she mentioned her father, he was silly and got hurt.

During the vacation between her junior and senior years Willard left for a long visit to a Western laboratory; he was ready now for research on his own. And then a new phase began—Joan knew for the first time in her life what it was to miss a person. He wrote long letters, with some distinction of style and personality to them, letters very different from the hungry, vapid notes she got from Ralph, from other boys. One was all about

the upper carbohydrates. She had to use a dictionary to read it. Reading his letters, she felt a profound affection rise and take hold of her. He loved her and she was, she knew, an excessively generous person; she wanted almost desperately to give him something—not necessarily in return, but something for its own sake. She didn't answer his letters in detail. She was a little afraid to write. Perhaps something was happening to her. Perhaps she was falling in love.

He came back. Joan was at the station. He limped from the train and held out his arms. She let him hold her a second and kiss her cheek, then felt a deep and passionate resentment. Not at him. At herself. Oh, this wasn't *right!* She had missed him like the devil, she was hungry to talk with him, she had almost persuaded herself she loved him; and here he was in person, at last, and it was no good. "Oh, sorry!" he said. "Bumped your arm." He was nervous. They walked down the station platform, Joan holding his arm with inexplicable hunger; or perhaps it was explicable, she wanted so badly to rescue something from this wreck, to hold something of him somehow, to maintain just for a little this illusion she had cherished, which evidently was just an illusion, and which had so confused and moved her.

They got into the taxi. Willard didn't understand why she clasped his arm so hungrily, yet averted her face to talk.

VII

"I'm in an awful state," Joan confessed to Fay.

Fay looked up. They had moved into a flat across the Midway; Fay was busy painting the radiator blue.

"Suppose," Joan demanded, "I never do fall in love!"

"Well, well!" Fay said.

"I'm excited about this—I'm awfully serious!"

It was only to Fay that she could talk about these things.

"I don't want to marry, Heaven knows."

"Just you wait," Fay laughed.

"I'm alarmed," Joan declared, "and ashamed of myself. Why, if he touches my hand, it just detaches itself from the rest of my body. And I *like* him so! Oh, I'm so sorry he loves me!"

"No one is sorry to be loved."

"And how *can* he be in love with me? It's so puzzling. He doesn't know me!"

"Miracles," Fay grunted. "Miracles. Wonderful."

Joan had taken off her coat and was still staring down at Fay, her feet wide apart, arms akimbo.

"Of course," she said, more quietly, "I don't often worry about this sort of thing. I'm rather remote from it, usually. But Willard always gets me started thinking ——"

"A wise young man," put in Fay.

VIII

Then during her senior year there was English 5. Really, come to think of it, English 5 absorbed more of her time than anything else, and it was surprising that she should remember these scattered incidents with Fay and Willard so individually clearly. English 5 was play-writing. Mr. Flynn announced one year, beaming with his sandy smile, that he would give a play-writing course, and Joan and Fay, with many of their friends, eagerly en-

listed. Joan didn't think she could write plays, but she wanted to try. Gunderson was in the class, the forbidding lad who did the literary column in *The Maroon*; Corcoran, a brilliant, provocative youngster, one of her old friends; Stern, the Jewish boy who punned eccentrically and had the soul of a poet in his dark, swimming eyes; a couple of girls attracted to the class because of the number of campus celebrities attending; two serious young men who took the course only because it was in their English sequence and who didn't know a play from a pigeon, so assiduous had been their training in prose-before-Beowulf. It was a small class, and Mr. Flynn got them to work in good order. They had three months before them, and three one-act plays each to write.

About Joan's first play Mr. Flynn said, "This is like solid gold—it is soft and heavy." But her second venture was much better. It was a farce, with the scene on ship-board; she decided later it was very thin, but it was amusing, and the class roared at it. A husband runs away with his own wife to keep her from another man. The second man arrives with the boat about to sail. They argue. Suddenly angered at the lady, both scorn her. The three get into quite an impossible situation. They forget time. The gangplank goes up, the boat sails, leaving the three to face a terrible, inescapable week together. "Undergraduate," pronounced Mr. Flynn, "but neat—neat."

Of course Joan always lost herself in enthusiasm for her friends; she talked so much touting Fay's plays that she almost forgot her own. Fay did one serious, fleeting, sensitive fantasy—something quite unlike her own quick speech—and Joan exulted in it. Of course Fay was really at work on a long play, a full-dress three-act affair; these

one-acters for this class were only drill. The long play was a secret. But Joan had seen it, and together they had read aloud the dialogue.

Under the lash of Mr. Flynn's exuberance, the spur of his disdain, the class did some exciting work. Corcoran wrote a really first-rate farce, and a new-comer, a dark horse, a young man named Kruger whom none of them had ever seen before, tossed off two workmanlike and brilliant pieces in the Schnitzler manner. Mr. Flynn, cigarette dripping from his mouth, paraded the aisles, exhorting, grimacing, denouncing, putting some modicum of vitality into the poor things they gave him. He sent them to see "The Beggar's Opera," and Joan saw it five times; but he insisted that they should see "The Cat and the Canary" too.

Then Joan had her great idea.

"Let's take the best three plays," she suggested, "maybe four, and produce 'em!"

"Good God!"

"We'll be responsible," she insisted, eagerly. "You choose the plays and direct, that's all."

It didn't matter, she thought back with pleasure, that none of her own plays was chosen. What did matter was that she had almost the most exciting fortnight of her life, helping to get the three selected plays in shape, and then, on that great evening of the performance, playing the lead in the fantasy by Fay. She had never acted before. She was not in the least scared. She slid through the lines cool as in a dream. The carefully hand-picked audience was gluttonous with enthusiasm. And everybody liked her tree. For during that fortnight she had helped with the stage-management, too. She decided that one set was enough for all three plays, and she designed

and painted it—a large tree, rather bloated at the top, with green trunk and fan-shaped, bright vermilion leaves.

Willard met her later in the hall. She jumped. She had forgotten all about Willard.

IX

Ralph was walking with her, silent and moody. She was getting to depend on Ralph; he was the sort of boy who, growing with one, became part of a background; mothers, as a rule, liked him better than their daughters did. Good old Ralph! Any time anything else failed her, any time she needed final succor, always Ralph was there—always Ralph.

"How's Pamela?" he was saying.

"Oh, all right."

"She's getting darned good-looking."

"You bet," Joan agreed.

They were coming home from the movies. They had just seen something called "The Vengeance of Monsieur Dupont," with Alice Joyce, and had liked it exceedingly. Joan watched the branches across the Midway scratch the night sky.

"Why don't you let your hair grow?"

"Why?"

"Oh, I don't know."

They walked silently a few moments. It was early when they reached home, and Ralph came in to sit down a moment. She unbuttoned her coat and leaned back. He fingered for a cigarette but couldn't find one.

"What's the matter?"

"Oh, I don't know."

"You're awfully mournful tonight, Ralph. Anything I can do?"

Silence again. Then:

"Oh, Joan!"

He leaned over and tried to kiss her.

"Don't."

He tried again.

"All right."

But she did not respond; he kissed her once and then lifted his arms helplessly and moved away.

"Don't be an idiot! Sit down."

"I want—to kiss you."

"I can't help it if I don't want to," she shrugged, earnestly.

"It's just your darned selfishness."

"What? Oh no!" Joan turned to him appealingly.

"Are you in love with anybody?"

She shook her head.

"There's something darned strange about you."

"I don't think so," Joan said, "really."

They were friends again before he left. But when she went to bed she was depressed. How could she help it if people always wanted this thing and she didn't—yet? Of course Ralph was just a silly boy. But a nice boy. She liked him.

X

"By George! Next month you graduate, Joan!"

She was wearing a dull-orange dress and Willard watched her face warm and shining within the square frame of hair.

"It's been a good four years. I've loved it so much." Joan smiled. "And such a lot of it good on account of you."

"And the years to come, Joan?"

He was balancing a spoon very carefully across a coffee cup.

"I don't know. I'm awfully restless."

"I love you."

"I know."

"That's good," said Willard. "I wonder do you know what hell it is?"

"Please." Joan turned slightly.

"I just wanted to tell you," Willard said.

"Well, thanks."

Then Willard decided to deflect the conversation to different things.

XI

Sometimes—it depended on moods—Joan was the one who did the questioning. One afternoon they drove westward out of the city, bound for one of her father's clubs where they could have some tea. Joan was talkative. She was asking him in quick succession about many things. They left the city behind, gasping smoke, lacerated by its own railroad tracks; they were past the hog-runnels and the green river flowing backward like a moat, past the portcullises of jagged signboards. They had tea. Willard was quiet and Joan kept talking of all the things she wanted to do. They drove back quickly, she telling him how good life was.

"But, Willard," she protested, back at her house again, "we didn't *settle* a thing! I wanted to explain so much this afternoon. What *am* I going to do?"

"Simple," he said, letting his pipe down. "Fall in love. Get married. Lots of kids."

She laughed. He turned to her and she stopped laughing.

"By George!" he said. "You might try me!"

XII

Perhaps a week later.

"Any luck?" he smiled.

Joan shook her head.

"I'm sorry."

"Of course. So am I."

"I shan't see you again."

"Oh—Willard!"

Strange how hard it was to break off with a man finally. It was like a defeat, somehow, and how stupid! Still, she couldn't have it both ways.

"No, I've taken that Stanford job."

"Oh."

He paused, waiting.

"Gee! I'm sorry!"

"It's a nice party," he said, pointing to their friends.

"I'll miss you, Willard. I can't help it if I can't marry you. Must you go? Just because——"

"Because what?"

"Don't be stupid."

"Oh! Sorry!"

"*Don't* apologize. It's all right."

"This is going to be hard," Willard said.

"Please don't talk about it then."

"Of course not. But I wanted to be sure. Absolutely sure."

She nodded.

"Your father looks well."

"No, I don't think so."

What a nuisance, being unable to achieve even such tiny conversational lies.

"There's *no* chance, Joan?"

She shook her head.

"Well, I may see you later tonight—but good-by."

My Lord! he was going to shake hands!

"Oh, come on, Bill; don't be so tragic."

"G'-by."

"I don't believe it," she said. "I'll see you again."

"We've had fun."

"Yes, Willard."

They both stood there, and apparently there was no more to talk about.

She felt intently moved and rather sick; she remembered that day she had taken his arm hungrily in the taxi.

He was white suddenly. He cried, "You can go to hell!" He limped from the room.

When Joan reached her room she broke down. She cried. When Willard reached home he took a cold bath and shook himself like an animal, and then worked most of the night on his last small-microscope calculations.

XIII

Joan turned in bed and in the dim light saw her bare shoulder gleaming. She caressed it with her chin and, crooking the elbow, felt softly the marvelous clear shallow of flesh before the elbow. She held the bare arm close over her face and her lips found the flesh of her arm, kissing it.

She turned over and smiled a little at herself and felt warmth inside herself.

"No," she whispered, "I'm not cold."

XIV

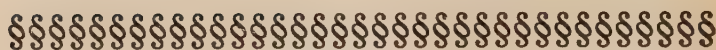
They sat in a huge semicircle behind Hutchinson. Her cap and gown was hot, the cool parchment of the diploma was in her hand. Over in that corner Pamela was grinning. Ralph, sober and handsome, was somewhere beyond, Fay next to him, rapt but scornful. The marshals paraded. From Mandel Hall soared organ music. There came the faculty, the crimson inner sides of their gowns flapping in the hot, booming breeze. Up got this man Macmillan. Commencement speech. What a bore!

"Elusion," he called his speech. It was about the land of Cockaigne. A symbol of personal escape through the life of the imagination. Utopias. Tishnar, Alsander, Erewhon, Cockaigne. Maybe this wasn't going to be so dull after all. Macmillan was an eminent architect or something and seemed preoccupied as he spoke. Whenever a genuine artist, whenever a genuine personality, sought escape, there it was waiting, this shadow land of elusion, this destiny of the creative man. One Cockaigne after another Macmillan described and analyzed. He swam through his speech smiling slightly and calm. There was purple inside his robe. Fay was winking, then solemn. Escape, elusion, evasion of reality, the life of the soul, the aware apperception of beauty, actual experience of imaginative ecstasy—all these things Macmillan found in his Cockaigne.

"We have then this ecstasy. When dreams fade, when illusions perish, when life stiffens and decays, there is yet something remaining." He had a rich voice, but curiously it sounded bored. "It comes in moments only. It is like a panorama lit by strange fires. You can see the panorama, but that is all; you cannot get too close. The

fire hovers and seethes eternally; it is part of you; it is in your soul. The problem is to find it. Find it and you have Cockaigne. No man has ever found it eternally. The ultimate escape does not exist. And ecstasy burns when you touch it. Like Medusa, too, it can turn to stone. No man ever found ecstasy and remained unscathed. But fire and stone are better than dead clay and stupor. Better. Good morning, young ladies and gentlemen."

Ecstasy. That was a good idea.



I

He had been in Washington and New York during the winter and was now back in Chicago. He liked Chicago. Most of the scenes in which his youth had been tempered

to preliminary maturity had occurred in Chicago, and sometimes he said the town was full of ghosts for him; but they were friendly ghosts. One of the few things he didn't like to recall was Leon's death. Poor Leon! It was too bad that Richard was away now, because it was only Richard who knew him really well; and he did not see much of Shirley because he was afraid he might again fall in love with her. He had no time for love—now. Of course there was Fay. Good kid. And Martin.

When he thought of his life before the Chicago years his memories were not so happy. There was his mother, of course, and of his mother he was devotedly fond. But it was better they should live in different cities. Aside from his mother he had taught himself not to think of home. Well, that was an exaggeration; what he meant was simply that he never did think of it. His father didn't exist. He had no father. He remembered the queerly articulated vow he had taken so many years before: "My father is weak. Therefore I am weak. My son would be weak. No one knows this. No one shall know it. And I shall spend myself on only a certain quality of love!" So many years before! What a hurt, serious kid he had been! Well, luckily, all such thoughts were long behind him now.

What counted now was work. And to marvel occasionally that his childhood had yet left him—what was he?—certainly bright and casual and eager. A little hard, too, maybe. And other things. "I ought to get some of this confounded cockiness shaken out of me," he smiled. Well—Martin—she had shaken some of it away. Luckily, he was through with Martin. For good. He liked her for her last words during that last phone call, spoken in her slight, throaty voice, between her queer, skinned lips, the upper one with no cleft: "People come—people

go. Good-by, Philip." And here he was already, restless again in spite of himself, eager and curious again, wanting desperately some one else. Love was a process of combustion, of course. Fuel. Love was fuel. For his confounded head with the more confounded brain inside it. How could he help it, always being in love with some one or other, usually harmlessly, usually ineffectually? He was no rake, God knew. Pleasant to run into Fay again after all these years. Good Fay.

The phone rang.

"Hey, kid, this is the President of the United States calling."

"Yes," said Philip, "I'm the Duke of Marlborough. What can I do for you?"

"I just called," said Mr. Jones, who was his editor, "to say that a deputation of gangsters is on the way, to exterminate you."

"My God!" Philip ejaculated.

"Seriously," continued Mr. Jones, who loved Philip like a son, "you're a young jackass, and we can't print the O'Banion piece; it's too rough."

"The devil it is!" Philip said.

"So hop in a taxi and come right down," Mr. Jones concluded, "and unless you want *me* to write it over again—and I'll murder it—rewrite it yourself."

Phil groaned and hung up. He would have cut his hand off for Jones. Tall, narrow man—grand sense of humor—shy and the sensitivest hard-boiled editor alive—looked like Carlyle. Philip got into his coat. He restlessly adjusted himself in the mirror, slipped into the lazily alert posture which he had assumed years ago as an affectation and which now was confirmed as habit in his very bones—shoulders atilt a little, head forward, arms often crossed behind his back—and after diving through

his papers went downstairs. All the things there were to do in the world! He had seven million things to do!

Of course it was girls like Fay who showed what a shocking sentimentalist he really was. He wouldn't *touch* a girl like Fay—not without the most scrupulously exact exploration of every possibility of her view of the situation first. That was what he prided himself on more than anything—he was scrupulous. He liked to talk to friends and shock them by being a little more honest than they. "Of course I have prejudices—lots of 'em!" How few people had the courage to say that, not saying it in mock-modesty or apology, but as sincere intelligent belief. Of course he was hard—so most people said. Stony. If they could only know!

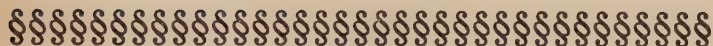
He was hard—externally—because he knew what he wanted in the world. He knew his path and it was crowded neither by soft nor by gregarious people. What he wanted was very simple. Fame. He was preoccupied now in choosing which of several vehicles seemed to him the most likely, the most plausible, and the most attractive initiatory steps to this final end. He knew, of course, that probably he would fail. But he meant to make a fight for it. It was fame alone, undiluted, which excited him. Power? No, he wasn't interested especially in power, since power carried with it some burden of public service, and public service completely bored him. Money? Didn't give a damn for it. Women? Sure. Lots of 'em! Of course fame would be a sham in the end. He knew that. Meanwhile the best avenue to fame seemed the pursuit and satisfaction of intellectual curiosity, and the erection of some edifice built out of that satisfaction—and that wouldn't necessarily be a sham. The essential preliminary edifice to be erected was some sort of critical work. No boredom attached to that! Philip didn't puzzle over

things like Richard. He took. Or tried to. He didn't believe much in theories, and detested those to whom obeisance to a theory came before practical fact, like missionaries or communists or reformers. He contradicted himself a good deal. One of his chief faults was that he was too mobile to revise his casual copy carefully—if at all—and consequently he often was inaccurate. Pooh! What was accuracy?

But he wasn't in the least conceited. He was a very humble person. He knew.



Chapter Eight



I

THE evening of Joan's party came around. It was more than a casual evening now; it was a definite gesture of farewell. She was going. She would quest the Fleece. She had been far too busy these past few days for anything but excited activity; first slackening on the evening of the party, her mind then exploded in meditation. She felt apart; conversations she heard seemed a million miles away. If some one had asked her name she quite possibly might have wondered for an instant what to reply, and, having replied, wondered if she were right. Then just before dinner she relaxed, and in long procession she drew memories through her mind with the gesture of some one unthreading a needle very slowly.

By nine-thirty almost everyone was there. Louie had strung lanterns in the garden because spring was definitely with them now. No longer the blustering wind of that Sunday a week ago when she had told her father she was going. Instead a mellifluous warmth made the evening both enervating and gay. She looked into the garden from her porch and saw the branches shivering slightly through the diaphanous breeze. She was wearing a dress cut so that the skirt swung round and full; the neck was

square and on one shoulder was attached a dull silver flower.

She saw Shirley talking quietly in a corner, her lovely oval face serious and pensive. Fay must still be upstairs; at least she wasn't visible; and evidently this young man of hers hadn't yet arrived. Pamela was in seven places at once. She saw the old gang from English 5 laughing around Corcoran in the garden, with him too some of the friends she had made after graduating from school, from the circle of society days following her *début*. Richter was there, and also a young teacher—what was his name?—Devery. Mr. Tilford was calmly and heroically being benevolent to everyone, including that violinist friend of his, Miss Jacobsen. Pamela was whooping and thought it was time to dance.

The door bell kept ringing. "Come on in," Joan would say, "and like my party."

II

He was not particularly good-looking, Joan thought, but as he stood lighting a cigarette his face was interesting. Evidently he was eager, because he was prodding about in the corner, talking alertly, and in his expression a slight upward strain was apparent; his forehead was corrugated, with two slight permanent wrinkles there. His eyes too had an upward slant and the brows lifted at the ends; the whole face was at once very alive and rather quizzical, and it seemed to hold a faint lateral gesture of inquisitive disdain. He was tall and lean and tapered from the shoulders. Joan heard him laugh; his face went upward, but his laugh downward—that might be an amusing combination. In his manner across the room she could feel a sense of awareness, of intelligence, and of

mobility. He leaned forward when he talked, with one shoulder atilt; when he did this his head cocked upward sideways, almost pertly. His eyes looked gray. His hair darkish.

"Yes," Fay laughed, introducing him, "this is him—Philip Hubbard."

III

Later Joan and Philip found themselves moderately alone and she said, "Really, I'm awfully glad to meet you. I've been rather excited about it."

"I hope the shock of disappointment isn't too severe."

"You're Fay's best friend, aren't you?"

"Hardly," said Philip. "Aren't you, rather?"

"I love her," Joan said. "Look! The lanterns are nice, aren't they? Come on out." They walked into the garden.

"I love her, too," Philip said, suddenly, "theoretically."

Joan looked up at him, frowning. "Is that a joke? or what do you mean?" She laughed. "But I suppose theory is best if practice is impossible."

"Oh no! I didn't mean anything in particular. But I never do last long with women. And so it's better to be in love with them theoretically."

"Are you in love with Fay?"

"She's not in love with me."

"I've wondered about that," Joan said. "But you haven't answered me."

"Nor shall I."

They had drifted to the punch bowl outside under the lanterns, and while drinking some one came up and begged a dance; but Joan shook her head and said, "No. Later."

She was feeling extraordinarily well tonight. She must ——

"Hello!" exclaimed Philip. "Look! What have I done to my shirt?"

There was a dark stain on the shirt.

"Punch," laughed Joan. "Dreadful!"

"My God!" he exclaimed, staring first at her, then at the shirt.

"You'll have to go home. Look! Dreadful!"

"I don't want to go home. I want to talk to you. And to your father."

"That's an idea," she suggested. "We'll borrow a shirt from father."

They went upstairs and found one of Mr. Tilford's shirts. Philip put it on and emerged laughing.

"What a splendid way to begin a party!"

"I don't mind," said Joan, "so long's you don't spill on *this* shirt. Father will be shocked anyway, though. He's very private with his shirts."

"So a man should be. This is a very good shirt, by the way. Probably I won't bring it back. I'm careless about such things."

"Don't believe it," she said.

"You're rich," Philip put in. They were downstairs again. "Money. What was it—glass—onions—shoe-strings?"

"My father is a lawyer," she explained with dignity.

"I don't like lawyers. Do you mind passionately if I smoke? Oh, pardon! Here, have a cigarette, too."

They passed through the drawing-room and he stopped to admire the big Brangwyns lighting the dark wall. All sorts of things were coursing through her mind. She must have a word with her father about the buffet. Wonder if she ought to telegraph to that hotel in New York. This

was rather a direct young man. Well, might as well amuse him.

"I don't last long with men, either," she reverted, suddenly. "But," she added, laughing, "not just theoretically."

"I take back that word." He laughed, too. "Sorry to have brushed you up. Still, might as well be honest in your subtleties."

Laughter evidently changed his face a lot. It made him less inquisitive and tense. He seemed to be watching her rather closely.

"I dare say you're rather particular—about love affairs."

"You bet," Joan said.

"Still—aren't you an awful heart-breaker?"

"Not by design—so to speak. It's not my fault."

"Of course it is. Just look at you."

"Well," she smiled, "don't put ideas in my head."

"I imagine you know pretty well what you're about."

"I'm tired of fencing," said Joan. "Let's really talk." They were still in the big dark room, standing in front of the pictures. He was atilt against the wall and she before him, interested, eyes bright, her head aside a little. Must see Pamela a moment. Wonder if the punch was all right. Philip started to ask about what she did and how and why, but she diverted him, for the moment, to his own work.

"You're a writer, aren't you? Fay said so, I think."

"Yes. I work on a newspaper in the daytime. On a book at night."

"That sounds rather conventional," she had to say.

"You're wrong. I'm not conventional. And neither is the paper. Nor my book."

"What's it about?"

"It's criticism."

He explained briefly that he loathed poets and novelists and other futile writers—so he called them—and thought the only thing really worth doing was straight hard-boiled criticism. Of books? Yes—but that was just the easy periphery. People? Yes, perhaps. Politics, institutions? Yes. "It sounds dreadful, but I'm afraid I'm a sociologist."

"A polemical sociologist," Joan suggested. "No, doesn't sound dreadful at all. And I'm fed up with poets, too, just now. Still"—she turned to him—"aren't you interested in beauty? Don't beautiful things move you?"

"More than I care to admit. I consider it rather a weakness."

"I don't," she said, seriously. "I jump at beauty. I eat it up."

He was still looking at her, not staring, but steadily, so that always he had a direct full view of her face. She wanted to look at him too, in the same way; in fact, there was something making her want to search his face, and also something in his cool gaze that made her turn away. Their eyes hadn't properly met yet. This was strange, because always she looked straight at people.

She motioned him toward the next room. The music was beating against the walls.

"I'm not much of a dancer," he hesitated.

"Do let's dance once."

"Dancing isn't one of things I do at all well," he repeated.

"It's more graceful," she said, "if I'm rediscovered dancing—and apparently having been dancing. Not," she added, "that I care a hoot. But I'm the hostess."

"I'm stupid. Of course."

They swung into the music.

"Geel!" Joan laughed. "You are terrible!"

"Don't advertise it."

"Don't step on me."

"All right."

"I'll teach you."

They reached the other side. People swallowed them up. It was about eleven, but there were still a few people coming—Joan dashed off to the door when Mary Detmers arrived. A few minutes later Philip drifted up, looking rather absently through the rooms, with his arms behind his back, poking his smile ahead of him. Joan waved and they danced again.

"I'd like to hear more," she began, "about this criticism business—why it interests you and what you're going to get out of it—to say nothing of other people. You have to have public spirit, don't you, to be a good critic?"

"That's an idea. I wonder. It's a long story."

She said what was in her mind: "I feel extraordinarily confidential."

"No—please."

"What's the matter?"

"I wasn't being rude. But I hate being a confessor."

"Oh, you misunderstood me! I meant for you to talk—not me."

"I dare say you like to talk, too."

"Of course," Joan said. "Talk oxidizes the intelligence, doesn't it? Gives it contact and movement and rubs the edges off?"

"Let's drift away here," he suggested, pointing to the buffet.

"What was that—by the way—you said about being honest in subtleties?" They reached the crowd again.

"Did I say that? Lord! don't ever check me up three sentences back. Here—mind if I smoke?—a cigarette

too? I'm the most fleeting person you ever met. And by the way, don't take anything I say too seriously."

"Of course I shall," she replied, briskly. "And make you remember."

"You haven't told me much about you," Philip said.

"Later."

"I want to hear."

"But you just said you hated being a confessor. Not," she added, laughing, "that I'm going to confess anything."

"What did I tell you about not checking me back?"

She smiled with unaccountable realization of pleasure. Her whole face smiled before she knew the smile had started. He was watching her.

"I'm rather afraid of you," Joan then said, having no idea she was going to say it. Yes, she was afraid. Queer—absurd!

He didn't show any surprise or make any disclaimer. But he kept looking at her curiously. She felt she might flush; for a fraction of a second she disliked him. "How can you be afraid of me? You know nothing about me—nothing."

"I'm a serious person," Joan said.

"So am I. Very."

"I have imagination I think," she meditated.

"I'm afraid I haven't much. That's why I'm a critic."

"Imagination's dangerous. Sometime I'm afraid of mine."

"Do tell me something that you're doing. What are you after?"

"As a matter of fact," she answered, slowly, "I'm just about to leave all this. I'm going away. Europe. Next week."

He stopped short. "Not really."

"You've been abroad? Oh, do tell me! I'm assembling

the most tremendous lists of things to do—places to see." She smiled, her blue eyes level. "I'm going to Colchis—Trebizond."

"You're going away—next week. Oh!"

"Well," she asked, "what's it to you?"

"Nothing—true. But I was beginning to think we might be friends."

"Of course! We shall be—in what time there is."

He helped her over the garden threshold. He had shaken his head once abruptly, but was now casual and smiling. "There!" he laughed, and his head went up again. He had taken her arm over the threshold. "I'm taking care of you already."

"You talk like a book," Joan said.

"Maybe then I'd better stop reading."

"A good book, I meant."

Quite without warning their eyes met. It was a shock. She felt excited and happy. They walked in.

"Ouch!" exclaimed Philip.

He had stepped on her. There was a mark on the silver slipper.

"What?"

"I meant ouch for us both," he said.

Pamela came up, nailing him with: "Here! I like you. Dance with me." "He's a terrible dancer," Joan called, laughing. "Never mind," disclaimed Philip. Joan saw her father being extremely engaging to three young ladies at once, addressing them imperturbably as if they were one. Fay waved mischievously from a corner. That blond girl—Doris Barron—had come with some one. Joan found Ralph—good old Ralph!—and danced with him. Austin cut in once and she listened to his melodious and icy wit.

It was an hour later, after midnight. Joan saw her

father dive for a young man at the punch bowl. She heard him exclaim:

"Here! I absolutely refuse to let anyone drown himself in my house!"

Joan felt bemused; something was puzzling her.

IV

Miss Jacobsen was lovely, Joan thought. She was wearing a very long, very tight velvet dress with tight sleeves, in color something between plum and magenta; the contrast to all the other bare arms was sensational. She looked, however, rather distinctly thin. Mr. Tilford danced with her twice. They did not talk while dancing.

Joan came up to them later and sat on the couch, her hair black against the pale wall. Miss Jacobsen's taut glossy hands were crossed. Mr. Tilford was pensive and smiling and letting smoke climb upward from his cigarette in a quivering, unbroken ribbon.

"I don't suppose there's any chance you might play?" Joan asked.

"Why, no. I have not with me my violin."

Joan had been taut for a moment after the talk with Philip; now she slipped a little, relaxing, down the couch; her hair moved down the wall.

"Really, we could send some one for the violin. Wouldn't you play?"

"But, really, no," Miss Jacobsen shook her head. "That is the most enchanting dress," she pointed smiling.

"She always has enchanting dresses," Mr. Tilford said. "That's my business. Joan is the lady I work for."

"I'm sure he'd work for you too, Hilda."

That was one of those things one said without realizing one said it, a thing so preposterously absurd that what

little meaning it had disappeared dwindling into further absurdity—and yet had a masked, inner, entirely unconscious reality of intention. Hilda's face was unchanged. But quietly Mr. Tilford said, "One of the nice things about Joan is that she always says what she means."

Joan thought how jolly it was that her father should have such a brilliant and famous young woman as his friend.

"I wonder," Miss Jacobsen said, "would you perhaps some day care to come to tea. I am leaving Chicago soon, but perhaps a day next week we could arrange."

"I'd love to, of course!"

"Can I come?" Mr. Tilford winked.

"No, it shall be for ladies alone," said Hilda.

Some one came up to summon Joan—Ralph again. She slipped from the couch and ran off with him. Hilda and her father turned quietly, talking together.

V

The sky was like a great blue bell with a light beyond it. The bell was the exact color of blue-print paper and it was quivering and luminous with the slowly diffusing light from outside. The stars seemed to be holes in the blue-print bell, letting through the light. Thousands of these holes dotted and figured the immense blue bell.

Joan felt subdued and puzzled and she slipped from the house quietly and walked toward the beach. Along the beach the surf rolled up in bluish, shuffling water. She stood against a tree, looking dreamily upward; then from nowhere Philip came and joined her. They walked along the beach, he a little ahead of her, prodding the sand.

She kept circling her head back. The warm night was transparent right up to the blue bell and the stars. It was

too beautiful. "I'll be able to see myself out of myself," she thought.

Then of course it was a perfect miracle that, talking quietly, still ahead of her, he should turn slightly and say:

"I don't feel that I know anything about you yet. Not a thing. I'd like to see you out of yourself."

She stopped. Teeth white, eyes white, she looked at him.

"You know what I mean? Do you believe in the causal theory of things? This—what shall I say?—this watch on my wrist has certainly something to do with the fact—well—that a man named Coolidge is president. Sure. If only you could see them both with distant enough perspective. That's the way I'd like to see you."

"It doesn't sound exactly intimate." She smiled slightly.

That had been exciting—wonder if he could do it again?—put in words coincidentally things she was independently thinking. They walked farther along the sand. The stars were extremely distant and distinct. Far down the shore the lights of the great hotels were blinking.

His voice came to her,

"What is it in you? You're not 'specially smart, are you?—or clever?—or sinful?" He laughed slightly. His laugh is utterly disarming, Joan thought. "You are rather beautiful—in a queer way—I suppose."

Her step faltered; she was walking very slowly. He saw and stopped, turning around.

She had a curious desire to say: "Get into the light; bring some light somehow and get into it. I want to look at you. I want to see your face."

But instead she talked reminiscently of idle odds and ends; and as she talked a curious sensation stole over her, as if she were another person overhearing herself.

She was apart, somehow, dreaming. The real she. The rest of her talked, and the real she listened. Then this sensation developed, and she quite sharply felt herself as two persons. The outer one was listening. First she thought she would some day know this scene again, in actuality, that now she was veritably dreaming. But that couldn't be correct. What was happening, on the contrary, was a repetition in actuality of something that had occurred subconsciously *before*. Her outer self overheard what she was saying, but the words had, in fact, been uttered in some sort of dream years ago; only now were they catching up. "Where have I said all this before?" she asked herself, sharply. Neither her outer self nor her inner self was in the least changed; simply the words said years ago by some part of her had become actual only now. She felt a duplication of personality. She felt she was eavesdropping on herself.

"Come. Let's sit down."

"I'd rather stand."

"Did you ever read," asked Philip, vaguely, "a book called *Shadow's End*—I forget by whom. Give me a match."

There! Those words had always been in her mind; now they were repeating themselves.

All of this had happened before. She knew her own reply. She had said it before.

"I haven't a match with me. But wait—yes, I have."

In the next sentence he would use the word impinged.

"That's a queer book, *Shadow's End*. Remember the meeting in the forest and the curious conversation of the lovers?—the way in that atmosphere their thoughts impinged? And ——"

There! She heard herself say, "D'you suppose there's an immortality?"

Yes—and now he mustn't break this spell; both of them were in it now—next——

"O Lord! such a question! But, yes. Don't you?"

Then she knew she must revert to the book.

"About *Shadow's End*—I liked the archery part."

"Archery! I was just thinking of that word!"

They were perfectly in unity; she could even dare to move her head a little, and the spell did not break. All about her was something like haze in a valley and soon she knew she must emerge from the valley into the clear uplands of concrete actuality. But not yet. This was too piercingly a delight! She shuddered a little and tried to huddle closer in the fabric of the dream. But it wasn't a dream! Now she was in four dimensions. Time was meeting itself now.

Sentence by sentence she knew what he would say. It would be something ridiculously commonplace this time.

"What an odd stone! Look! Marbled. Did you ever flip stones when you were a kid?"

Her answer was so sure it was hard to tell, Was it pre-conceived, was it natural?

"I like to flip stones now, but I daren't in this dress."

"I am so curious about you." Yes, she knew what was coming; she could not say it in words, but it was something about fire. "You're like fire rushing over a waterfall."

Her answer came without conscious thought; it was a flippant answer, but of course she could not keep from saying it: "Like a bonfire on ice, rather."

Then it was quite part of the picture that he should lean forward and pick up the marbled stone; then sigh, weighing it; then rise and let his arms fall.

"We'd better go back."

"No—let's not; just another minute here!"

He nodded. "Teacups—archery—dust against a flat horizon. Why are these things in my mind?"

"In mine too—just those."

They were both suddenly conscious of a more intense shuffling of the blue surf. A thin wedge of dance music slid like a searchlight from the house, finding them; she almost winced. They were both standing poised, stock-still.

Now—how marvelously clear her mind!—what would he say? Yes!

"Of course we'll meet again."

"Of course. Soon."

He would mention Fay.

"Fay can bring me around."

"But," said Joan, "I'm sailing soon."

The haze was thicker again. This last little grapeshot of conversation had not shaken it away. "The sound of a locomotive whistle late at night from a great distance—bright lamps and hands shuttling under them—clean white paper—things I love," he kept muttering.

"They're good things," Joan said. She looked up again at the stars. The sky was a little paler and the illusion of a bell was almost gone. Instead of holes the stars now looked like crosses—small blurred crosses in the sky. Thinking of things she loved, she mentioned newly peeled sticks and the sound of heels on hard snow and pebbles. He smiled, nodding.

An immense silent noise was flooding her brain. She could not emerge at all from this dream. She had no control of this inner personality which her outer self was overhearing. She did not want such control. Let the rest come! She felt a tightness in her mind; she put a finger to her ear and the droning noise increased manifold. "And furs," he added, "the touch of furs." Then in

quite a different voice he said, abruptly: "Magic! This is magic!"

"Yes," she whispered. "Magic—or madness."

"I don't understand this," he went on. His tone was impatient and almost curt. "I have never seen you before. What have you done to me?"

"You have seen me," her head levelled, "in dreams."

"Madness," he repeated her word. "The madness you want?"

"I don't know," whispered Joan.

"This is very important."

"I know."

"Listen. Heaven only knows what might happen to us. I do feel in the most extraordinary manner that we aren't for each other, yet we're being pulled together this way. I ought to say—I don't believe in permanencies." He shook his head quickly at her gesture of interrogation. "But I want you—you! ——"

Perfectly silent she stood watching. She had sunk somewhat in the sand, and looked immobile, squat a little and very sturdy.

"What *have* you done to me?" he whispered.

"Nothing."

"Then what have I done to you?"

The spell was almost over now—no—yes—she had to think for the first time what she was going to say.

"Oh, don't talk. Let's not lose anything of this. I don't know ——"

She had raised her hands slowly, with her head averted, as if in shame she was giving expression of such intimacy in company of another; he took both her hands. Did she want a declaration now? Oh yes! But she felt she could not pledge herself nor involve him in anything which, because their personalities appeared to meet in this rarefied

way, might leave them disconsolate later when their ordinary personalities took charge. Still, couldn't he simply take this moment?—meet it with her?—take her? She trembled. He must feel her hands trembling.

He neither moved nor said a word and after an interval he let her hands drop. She looked at him sadly. They might never have another moment like this. Her head drooped, but she moved for the first time in many moments, twisting her slippers out of the sand. He did not move toward her. He stood like a post. He must be feeling this very intensely, too. He kept looking at her in an almost awed, wonderstruck manner. Then she found herself suddenly extremely tired. She felt she could not stand. The spell was over.

"Please go now," she managed to say. Yes, break it off.

He stood stock-still.

"We'll talk about all this again. But now—please go."

"I don't want to go."

"Please."

"All right." He bowed. It was the first movement he had made. He stood like a shadow, bowing.

But come—this was incredible; it was starting all over again. She felt the deep surge once more of her crowded mind. This was exactly like those rare confused moments between wakefulness and sleep when every conceivable thought eddied circling through your brain, when sometimes your heart stopped and all your body tingled, trying to keep pace with the clear, crowded agitation in the brain. Now—what was real?—what not? Yes—he was saying:

"This beach and this low sweep of shore—it is quite like some tidal mist. Watch ——"

She felt herself sway.

"And," he said, and she knew what he would say, "this sort of mist—other people have lived in it before."

She wanted to say, Yes, other people—Lucretia, Helen, Eloise.

"Other people," he continued. "You know whom I mean."

This was unbearable. It was too late now—he had missed the moment. Break it off somehow.

"You can return father's shirt later."

"Good God!"

"It does bulge. Poor dear father."

"Good God! Shirts!"

Then the flat pale light hung close again. She saw the horizon dimly, and above the horizon the small crosses hung, very far, very bright.

"A dream other people have lived before," she found herself muttering. "No—this is all mine."

Again the music from the house came dancing over the lawn in a thin stream and reached the beach; she heard it and shook her head so quickly that the stars swung.

"I do not understand this," he said, and now his voice was not impatient, but slow, dreamy. "I have never seen you before. What are you doing to yourself—to me?"

The words slipped from her mouth. "You have seen me," she whispered, "in dreams."

"It's not all yours," Philip said. "It's mine, too—yours and mine."

She nodded.

"And," Philip said, "can't we take this moment now? It's far too precious to lose. Come with me now."

A moment ago she had all but said that. She had wanted him to say that. She began to tremble again.

He took her hands. But no. Not now. She felt that she might weep, and she could hardly stand. She felt how perfect this was as it was—it was complete—they had each reached mysterious completion together. Now it was better to leave this perfection, and not risk it with any anticlimax. Yes, finish it later. They knew each other and they understood—what each of them wanted would come. Let him leave her now.

"Later," Joan said.

He looked at her. Then, "I dare say it's best."

About all those other people—Lucretia, Elaine of Astolat, Eloise ——

"I must go," she managed to say.

"Good God! Shirts!" he cried.

"You'll come back?" she whispered.

"I'd rather stay."

"I don't understand this," whispered Joan, "but no—not now."

"I'll come back, then."

"Of course."

"Soon."

"Of course."

Philip loosened her hands and she saw that the wrists were white. Her arms fell of their own weight and brushed against her dress, rebounding a little. She stood silent and closed her eyes. She felt the spell go again, this time doubtless for good. Now she was only a blue-eyed, square-headed rather brisk young person again. But she could feel little tentacles of that hidden inner personality stretch out once more, waving wildly before a shell closed down to conceal them. The surf seemed silent suddenly. She looked and there was no second shadow on the soft, powdering sand.

Philip was away, walking swiftly down the beach. She blinked, shaking her head.

VI

The party was exploding. Inside, the buffet was a wreck. The violinist dripped sweat and the saxophonist was puffed out like a pumpkin. She entered the room. Pamela winked at her, a huge preposterous wink. She touched Fay's hand in passing. Fay had been flirting seriously—she did everything seriously—with Mr. Tilford. Joan went into the inner room. She felt drained.

Miss Jacobsen was dancing. Ralph cut in on her, swinging Pamela to Corcoran. Shirley was in a corner, bent in conversation with Devery. Wonder where Richard was. Part of the crowd was leaking into the garden. One boy was dancing with his head on the grass. A cloudy storm of casual verbal confetti was drifting through the rooms.

It was hard to hear oneself think. She did not want to think. Richter came up to dance with her and she danced around the room once. Louie was darting among the lanterns. She overheard Mrs. Pomeroy, who was sticking it out manfully—though now it was three o'clock—talking in a distinct deprecatory voice about vivisection. Sarah stood just inside the pantry door, stern, benevolent.

Joan walked up to her father, tossing her hair sideways with her eyes momentarily closed.

"Father," she said, abruptly, "listen. I've changed my mind. I'm not going away."



Chapter Nine



I

AFTER the party Mr. Tilford took Miss Jacobsen home. He was too considerate to keep Louie up any longer, and they found a Yellow cab at the Sheridan Road corner. Miss Jacobsen walked very close to him, almost hugging him, and once or twice quite unsteadily he walked from the sidewalk on to the grass. She was flushed and laughing.

"Mark, Mark—I adore you! You are like my child. I adore you!"

They stepped into the taxi and listened to the chained wheels rustle with peculiar and characteristic sound over the glossy pavements. There was a rug in the cab and they lifted it over them. Mark kissed her and she responded. She was quivering and felt that her slight taut body was beckoning to triumph.

"My own Hilda! My precious Hilda!"

Where the taxi entered Lincoln Park for the long drive tunneling the trees they leaned back and looked at each other breathlessly.

"You're glad you came?"

"So glad, Mark."

"You liked Joan?"

"Of course—loved her."

"But how can you have her to tea? Aren't you leaving Saturday?"

"O God! Always I forget. I will telephone and apologize ——"

"You see, that's why I was so anxious for you to come—to have you see Joan and like her, and understand all that Joan and the house and all our friends mean to me."

"Of course, Mark dearest."

During the week they had been hesitating toward climax. The situation had not changed. Hilda was leaving shortly for Boston; she would not be in Chicago again until she stole time away from her work in summer, perhaps not until autumn. And the Pennsylvania case on which thirty-seven months of work and perhaps three million dollars were hanging was coming to a climax these very weeks; and for Mr. Tilford to leave town a moment was utterly out of the question. In fact, had it not been for Hilda and his desire for Joan and Hilda to talk he would have refused to come to Joan's party; as it was, he would be a wreck the next day. Here it was after four! Good heavens! And he must be in court in the morning at eleven! He was surprised Joan had changed her mind and was not going away. He was glad, of course, too, but puzzled. But he knew she would explain, or that he would guess. Meanwhile he could not conscientiously worry about Joan now; the Pennsylvania affair and Hilda came first. Hilda was curled next to him, having made a nest somehow under the robe of his arms. He kissed her hair. He must get this Hilda business settled—before she left! He thought he had won. Loving him, she could not have the heart to refuse. She must make her mind up tonight. She must marry him—

promise to marry him—and in September it would be done.

Hilda nestled in his arms and was thinking what a miracle this was which had brought her in a few vivid years from a tenement in Copenhagen, eating precariously and studying against time during the dark winters, to Chicago and New York and all of America, known, respected, applauded, with a quite possibly great career before her, and in any case an assurance of comfort and luxury as long as she chose to work for them. But of course she did not care for comfort and luxury except inadvertently; she was an artist and what counted was music; and it was just a sublime gift of fortune that in America music was so richly rewarded. And it was a gift far more fortuitous and sublime that with her success professionally should come this love which completed it, without which it would be dull and tasteless. Hilda often surveyed her life and thought how extraordinary it was, after those people in Denmark, after her first manager in Paris and the teacher in Milan with whom she had lived for two years, after the scattered casual lovers she had had in Paris and New York, that it should be this calm, ironic, very capable, rock-hard, oldish man whom she should choose—indeed, whom she *had* to choose—finally. She loved him. That was all. She huddled closer and felt the taxi, like a chariot, turn them sharply from the park toward her hotel on the outer drive. For good—yes. On her terms. He was a professional man; his law came first. She was a professional woman; her music came first. Marriage, of course, was impossible. For the present, anyway. And how shrewd Mark was—how she loved him and saw through him, in this careful, astute campaign of his to make her change her mind. She could not help smiling. She wanted to smile. It touched her

almost amusingly that he, this personage, should have to bow to her—should lose. He would lose. She knew.

The taxi halted.

Mr. Tilford stepped out with her.

"Pay him," she commanded.

"No, I'll take him back."

"Pay him."

He paid.

They walked slowly up the marble steps together. At the door Mr. Tilford doffed his hat. No, he wouldn't come in; it was too late. Tea tomorrow, maybe.

"Mark—my darling—please—come in with me."

He steeled himself.

"No."

She watched him for a moment, and then her teeth shone with savage laughter and she struck him with her fist violently on the cheek. She saw him physically brace himself. Then his hands came over her head and around her neck and, almost choking her, he forced her head back and opened her mouth with kisses.

"No!" he cried. "Damn you, no!"

She wept furiously.

"No," he said. "I want to—God knows. But no! I can be stubborn too. No!"

They did not talk long and Mr. Tilford opened the door for her and saw her on the way upstairs. She was black and trembling. He walked out again, cursing himself and feeling there was something cursed about his tradition and his inheritance. He could visualize Hilda's anger and humiliation, and it frightened him. But he knew he must see this out in his own way and he knew he couldn't but win.

He reached the park. A taxi came. He hailed it. His face was white.

II

After the party Joan went upstairs to bed. She walked across the bedroom and opened her windows wide. She could not see the water, but she could hear the surf again; it was sliding up the beach with the sound of paper rustling. She sat in the window-seat and let her eyes explore the sounding darkness until she decided it was time for bed.

Her mind was blank, but she wanted to survey herself. Surely something vital and important had happened in her life, and now was the time to think it over coolly, to adjust herself to its impact and influence. She watched the darkness and heard the whimper of her blond tree. The house was dark and absolutely silent, but in the silence a sort of rhythm was asserting itself, repeating itself.

She sat a long time and soon a thin ribbon of red stretched like a cord along the horizon and then spread in spots like a line of red ink badly blotted. She wanted to tremble, but couldn't. She slipped into pajamas and carefully lowered herself into the covers—carefully, as if she had been ill, afraid to jar her mind by any untoward or sudden movement. Across the room she could read the phosphorescent face of her clock, reading twenty minutes past four. The Sorolla on the wall above was just visible.

Just before she fell asleep the silence of the house did in fact seem unbearable. It came in short beats. It beat in her ears so that the whole house seemed to throb. She curled with her legs almost to her chest, like an animal, and tried to relax and sleep. She could not sleep at first because it seemed she had been asleep all along.

But really for the first time in her life she had been

alive. She knew that. It was a good thing. At the very beginning she had feared Philip because she thought perhaps Fay might love him. There were some things one did not do, and one of them was to risk even the slightest chance of hurting Fay. Now, luckily, that danger was removed. Fay did not care for Philip. She was sure.

It was pleasant now, lying more quietly in the small bed. She could feel herself falling asleep; she felt the last vestiges of consciousness rise thinly and dance, like the red tongues of the sun's corona. In the house the vibration persisted and she listened intently to try to seize and measure it. The light was almost clear now and she could see the silver scissors glisten on her dressing-table. But she could not sleep.

"Clang! Ding-a-ling-ling! Brr-rrr-rrr! Ding-ding-ding-ding-*ding!*"

She sat up with a shock and heard Philip's voice. She listened hard, not believing its reality. Then he laughed downward slightly into the phone and she recognized him. She said nothing after her first sleepy hello, but tried to collect herself and follow precisely what he was saying. Then he finished and the room hung quiet and still.

"Yes!" Joan said, quietly and clearly into the phone. "Of course, Philip—yes!"

She slept soundly then. It was late when she awoke, smiling in the morning.

¶ BOOK II: *Philip*



Chapter One



I

JOAN arrived pretty nearly on time the day after. Philip met her smiling at the stair, and took her in.

"What a delightful flat! It reminds me of the one I had with Fay at school. It's a little smaller, maybe. I didn't know lonely men went in for these things."

"I'm not a lonely man," Philip said.

The room was stacked with books. It was very neat and orderly, quite unlike bachelor flats she had imagined.

"Now shall we have luncheon here," he asked her, "or go downtown somewhere? Can you cook?"

"An omelette, maybe."

"I can cook quite well. But I'll let you try your hand once."

Joan foraged through the kitchen, found some eggs, and proceeded to work. Philip was not at all helpless; he knew where the salt was and how to mix the batter. She set the small table in the kitchen while he found some tomatoes, washed and cut them.

"There," Joan said, "I'm ready."

"This is it," Philip pointed, after lunch. Miraculously the omelette had been an edible omelette.

"What? Oh—your book!"

"It's about Roosevelt. Did I tell you the other night?"

"What kind of book?" Joan thumbed through the typescript. "Life and letters?"

"No, I don't go in for embalming."

"Cynical political essay?"

"No, hardly."

"I like brief biographies—works of art themselves—which try and tell why a man's life was a work of art or not."

"That's just the kind of book I'm trying to do."

"Don't you have to be in Washington to do it?"

"I go to Washington two or three times a year for the paper." Philip prodded around the room. "In fact, I began to write it there. It's almost done now."

"I want to read it," Joan said.

"Here's something amusing." Philip reached for another manuscript. "It's a paper about the collapse of Chicago. I've just finished it. Maybe it's good."

"I like Chicago," Joan said. "There are plenty of cities you can hear and smell. This one you feel, somehow."

"Chicago is a sort of sarcophagus of adolescence," Philip smiled. "A sort of cemetery of the imagination. Think how good it was ten years ago. And now—I suppose I should move east."

"I suppose you will some day."

"We had good people here once. But look at them today. All of them exploded. Look at Sandburg, writing children's stories; Masters never able to live down his one good book; Anderson up to his knees in mist, and then mist again upwards from the pelvic arch. And lots of others."

"Why do you stay?"

"I like it."

"And think," Joan wondered at herself. "Yesterday I was setting out for Europe. And now—I'm not."

"Oh!" His face smiled all over. "You're not going? Really?" He was shocked and pleased. "Then I am glad I telephoned."

"I'd made up my mind," she told him, smiling, "before you phoned." She was tingling, letting him know she was staying.

"Well, I'm glad I asked you to lunch then. Sorry I called at such an unearthly hour. Did I wake you up?"

"Idiot! Of course you did."

"I couldn't sleep," Philip explained.

"I could," Joan said.

He hesitated a moment, as if he would mention their meeting on the beach the night before; Joan hoped rather that he wouldn't. That meeting was perfect; let it stand. He must have seen what she felt, for he said, simply:

"I thought we might lunch together because it's my day off. We could run some errands this afternoon. I see you have a car."

"Let's talk first. Shall we?"

"Delightful. Here—a cigarette?"

They talked, but it was not talk either of them could have reproduced; nine-tenths of their sentences were unfinished, and all of them quietly staccato. They found themselves startlingly in agreement on things they loved, with just enough difference in opinion to salt and spice their comment; and they found that they didn't differ so much in opinion, after all, but only tangentially, in point of view. It was extraordinary, they liked *all* the same things! What fun to find some one else who knew the early Lawrence books, to discover another person who knew and prized that secret poem, "The Blue Ship." And wasn't it exhilarating, here was a man who had seen

Caligari, and could hum the second movement from the "Sheherazade," and didn't quail at mention of Ingres or Fragonard. For years they must have been reading and seeing the same things, exploring parallel shafts through the clear light of the imagination. And quickly they piled up a fund of common experience.

"And the 'Marriage Circle'—you saw it?"

"I should say! And it reminds me somehow of an old Valentino picture called 'Enemies of Women.' You remember?"

"Of course." Philip smiled. "Oh, by the way, you've read this?"

He dove along the shelves and found *Memoirs of a Midget*.

"Have I!" echoed Joan.

"This is my favorite novel." He pointed to *War and Peace*.

"Something you said reminded me—did you ever see anything so delightfully ridiculous as the flapper-bandit story last night in the paper?"

"What paper?"

"The *Sentinel*, I think."

"I wrote it."

"No!"

"Yes," he reverted, "Whitehead is the best of the mathematical philosophers; makes Russell look like a baby."

"Haven't read him."

"About travel," Philip said. "But no, I mustn't talk about Europe now!"

"Go ahead," Joan told him. "I'm a fool about distance."

"So you're not going away!"

She didn't know whether to nod or shake her head.

"Do I need tell you"—he was prowling along the

bookcase with his back partly turned— "that I'm awfully glad?"

It was good, she thought, they were keeping secret between them the other background, that dim cloud wherein they had groped together, puzzled, dreamlike, wherefrom this clear shining rain of contact was now descending. They were learning to be friends. "I feel as if I'd known him all my life," Joan thought.

"Let's do those errands," she suggested. "And then come up north and we'll have tea at my house. I have some things I want to show you—prints. Do you like Albert Besnard?"

"Just a moment. Must phone my office."

He lit another cigarette and spoke briefly to his editor, the humorous Mr. Jones.

"I want to hear all about that work, too," Joan said.

"It's great fun—nuisance at times."

They stacked the luncheon plates and slid downstairs together.

"Can you stop near Field's?" he asked. "I have something—a present—I want to buy for Fay."

II

He bought a scarf. Fay's birthday came midway in the week. Joan would have shopped an hour, but Phil had her out in the street again in ten minutes. Under the L tracks they walked, dodging the noise, to Franklin Street, where Joan had parked the car; then set out north. A blast of wind hit them from the lake at the corner of the drive, fairly shaking the car.

"Yes," she answered him. "Of course, I'd love to." Talking vaguely about a play to see. "Did you like my father? He's really quite fine. Maybe I love him too

much." Philip looked perfectly at ease; even the forehead corrugations were gone. Joan slipped into a dream.

"Oh," she laughed, "I can drive anything with four wheels."

They lined up to await the signal lights at the entrance to Lincoln Park. The broad stream of traffic spread out to make three separate streams. The forearm of the boulevard separated here at the wrist into three straight fingers of road. She swung into the outer one, sweeping along the lake.

Rejoining the middle finger downhill at the bridge, she skirted a big caramel-colored omnibus at the turn. Ahead of her was a taxi. This made three vehicles, now bunched together, headed down the steep pitch of hill. Hello! Something was happening. The taxi immediately ahead was stopping. Silly thing for a taxi to do. Joan couldn't edge closer to the right, that big omnibus was roaring just behind, and the other half of the road was packed solid with machines moving in the opposite direction. She pressed hard on the brakes. The car swerved. Crash!

"You're all right if the bus doesn't hit you," Phil said, quietly.

The bus turned out just in time.

Rip!—crash!—crash!

"We're not out of it yet!"

Joan felt a sweeping panorama of faces leaning from cars to watch. Now people were running.

The wreck of her car was still moving; it was swerving nervously and chugging. It had climbed right into the taxi, demolishing it. There was a good deal of glass still falling like flat icicles on the pavement. She felt a little sick and very excited, but evidently she was not hurt. It was a miracle. The whole front of her car was bashed in, and the dashboard over her legs a crumpled ruin.

"What a mess! Let's get out and look."

She climbed over the broken door. Glass fell from her lap. The car was still trying to move and she realized she had forgotten to turn off the power. Policemen surrounded her. Everybody stared when an old gentleman suddenly popped out of the ruins of the taxi and kept shouting, "I say! I shall be late! There has been an accident!"

"Is anybody hurt?" Joan whispered, quickly.

"Move along. Along wid ye!" shouted one policeman to the crowd.

"It was a brand-new cab, moddom," the chauffeur was repeating.

"Say, how about your friend, there," pointed the policeman.

"Oh!" Pain, horror, turned her face white. She was at the car in a bound. "Oh—quick—here!"

"Something's happened to my foot," Philip said.

"Get a doctor!" Joan commanded the policeman.

"Philip—just a second. It'll be all right. I'm so sorry. I'm a fool! Oh!"

Daydreaming that way. Cursed criminal idiot she was.

"It isn't much," Philip reassured her. "I'm sure nothing is smashed. No blood. But I can't get up."

They lifted him from the car and found he could not walk. Joan turned sick as she saw him sitting on the curb, propped against a lamppost. His left foot turned out queerly; he looked as if he had two left feet.

"Don't cut the shoe. It's really nothing," Philip insisted.

The buses were moving off and at the corner the policemen whistled shrilly and traffic began to move again.

Joan gave her name and then hailed another taxi. "Here now," she took command, "into this taxi—quick!"

"The crowd'll ransack your car," Phil protested as three men hoisted him into the taxi.

"What's left of it," rather bitterly.

"It isn't badly smashed."

What to do? Drive to a hospital? No—it didn't look really serious. To a doctor? No—

"May I ask where are we going?" Philip asked.

"Home," Joan said.

III

He did a lot of talking in the next ten days. It was seldom consecutive talk, but afterward she could piece the main ideas together.

He was in the guest room on Joan's floor. Fay and Joan and Pamela tended him. One of the metatarsal bones was broken, the doctor said.

"My God!" he exclaimed one afternoon. "Isn't this a marvelous time in American life! Thank Heaven we're born in this century! It's two things, isn't it?—a break-up and a beginning. The war didn't bowl us over, but it did shake us up. And when you shake up a continent of this size, things do happen. Why doesn't some one catalogue the surface of the '20's? Skyscrapers and John Scopes; ice-cream soda and sex-appeal. Let's have a contour map of the whole thing. Only Heaven knows what's underneath. But at least let's get the surface clear." He paused, laughing. "Hmmm! May have to do it myself!"

He liked to talk about contemporary books. He had a chart ready one day of American novelists, their program (as he called it) and performance; most of them he scorned.

"But of course there has been an advance. Think

where we were twenty years ago. All of us at full-stop, saluting a New England graveyard. And now the lid is off and one by one emerge these astonishing apparitions—people jumping up like fingers, caked with sulphur, fresh from hell. Think back to the days when if a girl got kissed before page three hundred and sixty-seven of a book it was an evil book! We're beyond that, now, at least. We'll never be quite so complacent again. We seem to be getting curious about ourselves and self-conscious—at last. Well, what I'm pleading for are critical standards to be built up whereby this new self-consciousness can be gauged."

Joan would argue a while and he would listen patiently, smiling from the big chair.

"Yes, criticism is the stuff; it's what we've got to have. I don't mean literary criticism so much. As you know, I think most artistic writers are futile. Art is nothing, in the last analysis, but either an escape from or a substitute for life. What we need is sociological criticism. What's that? Would I rather be a critic than an artist? Lord! yes—million times."

It was another day, Joan remembered, that he talked a little about biography.

"It tickles me"—he laughed at himself—"to see the wide, wide world swipe one of my ideas. Look at this wave of biography we're having. Isn't it grand? I think so. I'm glad my Roosevelt book will be only one of many. To think that so far we've never had a good critical book on Roosevelt! Isn't it quite shameful? And Wilson. I know what I'd do if I were writing a book on Wilson. I'd insert an advertisement in every likely newspaper in the country, asking for letters from anyone who ever loved or hated him violently before he was twenty-five. That

might give a key. All his life Wilson was either messiah or devil.

"But about biography. I'd like some one to give me a real job—survey the whole of American history, and then to assign various people, poets and novelists, critics and research men, to cover it. Wouldn't that be nice?" He chuckled. "We'd take the gold rush, say, and get Lindsay to do a narrative on it. Hergesheimer to write brocaded stuff of our early urban societies. Upton Sinclair to make a novel out of life in a modern university. Get some young poet to write an epic on Ponce de Leon. Send some one to Rochester and write the history of photography. Sandburg could do another lyrical Lincoln. And in fact we'd find jobs for everybody. Good idea! wouldn't it be fun? Of course I don't think these people I've mentioned are too good, but they're the best we have. And then biographers. Hosts of biographers. Snooping around everywhere. Digging out strange characters, strange careers—showing how normal and inevitable they really were. But now's the time to begin. Soon it may be too late. America is like the richest museum in the world with no identification tags on anything.

"Some people for example? About whom should we write books? My child, there are hundreds. I've said there's a pleasant little movement in biography beginning—but it's only beginning. There's never been a good book on Andrew Jackson, or Henry Clay, or Calhoun. Think of Decatur, Dr. Eliot, Houdini, Senator Penrose, Darrow, Valentino, Dr. Steinmetz, George Eastman, the Rockefellers, the Mayos, Ford, J. P. Morgan. There's a book in each to knock your eye out. Of course, some of them are being done. I hear there's good work going on—on Hearst, for instance, Dwight Moody, Franklin, Jim Hill, Bryan, Beecher, Barnum. Well, let's have some

more. Many more! It seems so silly—here in America in this day and age—to waste time writing about Palmerston or Mohammed or Genghis Khan. They're interesting—sure. Any life is interesting. But they're not our job."

"You have a little fever." Joan looked at the thermometer sternly. "Time for bed."

"Oh, the devil with bed!" He was propped up in a chair across the room. "Are you putting those names down? Well, don't forget Willard Gibbs and Sam Gompers and poor old Harding. And Stieglitz and Michelson and Amy Lowell. I'd include, too, the man who invented Listerine and certainly Mr. Addison Sims of Seattle—and don't omit the advertising man who conceived Buick Takes This Hill on High.

"We ought to have other sociological studies, too. Of course. Not just biographies. Has anyone ever tackled a real study of baseball? Or a phenomenon like Marshall Fields in this city? Or the new movie theater on Lake Street—what's it called? I'd like to make a collection of twentieth-century American advertisements, and restaurant bills of fare, and billboard posters, and radio programs. These things—the way we do them—are new to civilization and they ought to be put down. Well, of course, people are making a beginning. That's why Mencken is so important and why Lewis is adding life to the language."

"What's going to be the vehicle of all this charting?"

"I don't know—a magazine—a library—preferably some sort of foundation."

Here was an American who took being an American seriously, Joan thought.

He was quieter now. He was liking all this! "This is

what I've needed for a long time," he smiled. "I hope I cure slowly!"

IV

One night, waking up with the house dark and all the world resolved darkly into doubt—really there was one thing she must do—she must do one little thing. She crept from bed and slid silently down the hall; slowly she slipped the door open with her hand tight on the knob, then felt her way across the room and into the chair beside him.

Only a few hours before she had been sitting in that chair. "Well, good night," she had said. "You're still an invalid. Go to sleep." He put down his book and reached out his hand, taking hers. "Good night." She backed from the room, waving. He smiled. She hadn't been able to sleep, back in her own room.

Now apparently he wasn't breathing. Yes—listening hard—she could hear him nicely. She couldn't see his face at first, then slowly it became clear. He was lying almost face downward. She could see the edge of it. Sitting, she did not stir. If he should wake up! To trace with light finger-touch the line from throat to ear!

She sat a moment, actually with her finger straight outstretched, then wavered and withdrew. No. What a silly, childish thing to do! But instead, maybe she could just touch his head. He wouldn't awaken. She waited, listening again to his breathing, then dared it—the lightest touch. He didn't move. Quietly then, after some moments, she slipped from the room. Back in her own room she switched on the lights and blinked. She did not know what to do. She laughed wildly, not making a sound.

v

Joan still didn't know exactly what was happening to her. She felt herself slipping onward steadily into an absorption which was far deeper than anything she had known before, deeper and more dangerous and subtler. Of what did it consist—this extraordinary rapturous exhilaration she was feeling, this equally extraordinary occasional dismay? Mostly her absorption was calm, intense, and totally secret. She could not acknowledge even to herself some of the things she felt.

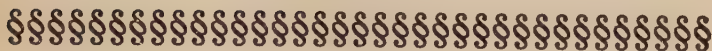
How quickly she told him about herself, almost as if she were another person, as if she wanted to see herself as some one new with his eyes, to discover itself jointly with him. During the mornings she crept into the room and sitting silent close to the bed waited for him to waken; waited with a cool alertness to see precisely in what manner his face came out of slumber—first the upward tilting of the forehead, then the lips moistened a little, then the eyes slowly opened—it was with such fastidious consecutive detail that she wanted him to discover her. But *she* wasn't analytical about herself. She was simply a little scared and happy and waiting. "Does he love me? I don't know. He hasn't said so."

Whatever her absorption was, queer delightful things were part of it. How difficult it was to resist bending down a little when she said good night—bend down and touch that pleasant earnest forehead with her lips. Of course there were occasional fleeting doubts, but for the most part the problem seemed quite simple. Here was some one you wanted, and that was all; you had to have him and you took him. Not yet, of course. Better to wait a little. Meanwhile there seemed to be another dis-

turbing thing, which was that the person about whom your emotions arose apparently knew what you were thinking—and didn't say anything. But could he know her fear of being close to him, her intense delightful fear of being close?

Trying valiantly to channel in her mind the quick, well-ing course of these emotions, Joan at the same time let the channel itself carve through her mind where it would. The main channel was perfectly straight. It was only the small tributaries which confused her. Well, she would dam them up, she would bar their currents. She wanted to be close to him always, part of him, *of* him. She wanted him in loveliness and terror, to complete her, to fill her. How amazing, how extraordinary, this force of personality! Why did *he* move her so? Why couldn't she pick and choose? But Joan knew she couldn't pick and choose. It was settled. She knew now that the course of much of her life had been decided. And even this didn't seem unreasonable! It was all clear. It came over her like a wave, it almost drowned her—what she wanted was to sleep with him.

Chapter Two



I

FAY was so busy during the week that Joan hardly saw her. The play was on the point of production, and rehearsals kept her occupied every afternoon, every evening. Joan awoke, startled, to the fact that she had scarcely thought about the play all week—and a fortnight before it had been as exciting as anything in her life! But she did manage to hold Fay for one brief conversation.

Immediately after moving Philip into the house and finding how deeply he excited her, she went directly to Fay and asked, point-blank, "My dear, about Philip, are you in love with him?" If Fay had said Yes, Joan would have dropped everything at once; there was still time. Probably she would have had a bad few days; perhaps she would have gone off alone somewhere, and then reverted to her plan of so few days before—Europe. But Fay had not said Yes. She had not even protested "No!" emphatically. She grimaced and laughed, saying "Philip? Rather not. He's an amusing person and he likes me, I think, and I like him. Once I was gone on him a little—years ago. Not now—Heavens, no! He's rather fine, I think—except he's never still long enough for anyone to find out. By the way, I've changed that third scene—you remember—that filthy scene with Arkwright."

And if Fay realized what was beyond Joan's question, she made no sign.

Joan wanted forthwith to declare herself; she wanted at once to elucidate her own position. But surely that was impossible, and in fact absurd; she couldn't tell Fay she loved Philip, any more than she could tell herself—yet. But Joan did ask a question or two. Where had Fay met Philip? How long had she known him? Why hadn't she talked about him more? Why produce him so sensationally this way? Fay answered these questions. She met Philip the winter before in New York. But she had known him—oh yes!—for many years; they had been neighbors in school days in Iowa. Then they had lost touch. In New York they got to know each other again. A few days before the party she ran into him accidentally in Chicago—had no idea he was in town—told him to come around. That was all. Joan listened, and felt like a balloon lifting.

Now it *was* possible—ah!

II

Fay's play was called "Judgment Jane." This was the nickname given in childhood to the heroine. It was not a play rigidly mortised into neat, articulated acts; discursively it ran, like Fay's own conversation, through a series of tableau-like scenes. It opened in a mining-camp, with Jane waiting at table. It progressed fitfully through her life, first an episode when she was a guide on a dude ranch, then a scene in a hotel with the man who carried her east to make an actress of her, then others describing various episodes in her emergence; at the end a bitterly wrought, poignant triologue, with Jane talking in a dream alternately to each of the two men she loved.

A group of outsiders, some of whom Joan remembered from English 5, were producing the play. The theater was in a garage. It held a tiny stage and an audience of perhaps seventy people. Joan helped to finance the venture, and it was she who bore proudly the title house-director. It was said several of the downtown critics were coming. Mr. Flynn promised to come, and came. Joan and Philip arrived early and, after working backstage, they squeezed into their seats, waiting for the house to darken. Phil was hobbling on a stick now. Fay said she wanted to blush unseen, and so sat alone far back.

The lights clicked off; the curtain rose.

Joan heard Philip whisper:

"It's really good. She can write dialogue."

"You bet."

They were sitting close on the little chairs. Joan felt comfortable warmth from his shoulder when he leaned to whisper. The girl playing the heroine had a slight cold. Now that amazing middle scene was coming.

Jane walked into her New York house. She was in love. Remarkable how Fay got that sense of love on the stage. Sitting there, Jane found her lover in another woman's arms. Fay did wonders with this quite conventional situation. Jane neither ranted, wept, nor faltered. Yet her life was crashing. She smiled a little whitely and stepped out of the room as quickly as possible, saying only, "Oh—I do beg pardon."

The lights clicked on for one of the brief intermissions.

"Perfect," Philip said.

"I wish she'd fight."

"No, she's doing the right thing. She's wise. If she implored or protested or made a scene, Arkwright would

have excuse to break with her. Now he's got to go on and explain."

"Well, wait. We'll see."

After the next scene came the only long intermission. There was a rattle of cordial applause. One of the downtown critics squeezed from his chair and made for a telephone.

Fay drifted up, sauntering through a ripple of congratulations. "Hello, children!" she smiled to them, then slipped in on the other side of Phil for the second half of the play. The people behind scenes bungled their work somewhat and the intermissions moved slowly. Joan heard Fay whisper, chuckling to Phil, his upward head cocked over the other way.

A line came from the stage:

"I'm not interested in problems; I'm interested in solutions."

Fay whispered, "Listen to that idiot drone my lines."

Joan leaned over—one eye on the stage—and whispered, "Fay, it's good!"

Philip smiled at her, too. Fay was twisted back in her chair, watching the stage, half grinning. The last scene was on. The heroine sat alone in a warm, bright corner of the stage, her hand flat over her eyes. "The only thing that counts," she was saying, "is being loved."

"Must have believed that myself once," Fay grinned.

Then at the next line she leaned forward. "In rehearsal she never got this straight. Oh, *good*, that's over!" She giggled a couple of times before the end. Joan reached over Philip and patted her knee. At the end Fay was a little solemn. She said quietly,

"I suppose this being over takes something out of me. It seems pretty poor, but I wrote it and I s'pose I have to stand for it."

Philip and Joan hoisted her from her seat, whereupon she ran for cover, dashing back-stage.

"Let's follow her."

Fay was congratulating the cast. "My God!" she said to the leading man, "you *were* terrible." To the heroine: "My dear, I adored you. If it's any good it belongs to you. Look out for that second scene next time. I'll scream or die or something if you forget again. But you were adorable." To the leading man again, "Dick, you know, really you were *fine*. Watch out—that rope there. Say ——"

"They're yelling for a speech," Philip told her.

"Tell them to jump in the lake."

"Let's go out and have a sandwich," Philip suggested.

"No, I'm going home," Fay said.

"Oh, come on!" implored Joan.

"All right, but wait a few minutes. . . . O God! do I have to shake hands with all these people? . . . Mr. Flynn, Mr. Flynn! what do you think of your champion class-cutter now? . . . Hello! here's Pamela! Musta been way under *your* head, infant."

"Swell play," Pamela said.

"Wait just a moment, Joan. Where are all these people coming from? . . . Oh, hello there! So this is Mr. Blythe. Like my play? Gee! so did I!"

They were out on the street, walking toward Argyle and the drive. Philip was still hobbling, but could manage a block or two.

III

Then in the days that followed Joan and Philip, exploring one another, became very close. It was difficult at first to know him well, because merely by his presence he

excited her and obscured her vision, and in addition several things in his character and temperament puzzled her; but little by little she was finding out things about him. And that was enough, she thought, as a beginning.

Evidently he was quite poor. Rather, he was too generous with what he had; generous with himself because he liked good things, and to others both as inclination and duty. For instance, it was clear that he supported his mother. He did not speak about his family much. He was born in Iowa, and his mother still lived there; he mentioned her randomly and affectionately. His father must be dead.

Joan gathered almost at once how radically he differed from her in almost every detail of background and philosophy. They were both, she thought, honest and intelligent, and in general they liked the same things, but these were almost their only points of general contact. She was a traditionalist; he was a rebel. He wiped God, society, tradition, patriotism, off the boards, but not in any spirit of organized inferiority. He scoffed as much as she at those feeble radicals the depth of whose impotence was matched only by the altitude of their aspirations. He didn't want to change things. God, society, tradition, were of no practical use to him and therefore did not exist. He believed only in individuality. He wanted only to be let alone.

She didn't know what he thought of marriage. He had never mentioned marriage. This discomfited Joan, and she wondered if perhaps his hesitation might be due not merely to a theoretical desire for liberty, but to something deeper and more personal in his life; perhaps his mother and father hadn't got on well. She gathered he must have had a miserable childhood. She thought of her own mother. For some reason Rosalind was in her mind a

great deal these days. What would Rosalind think of her?

Joan found out early that what he believed in mostly was work. "I'm terribly sorry. I can't go to theater tonight, after all. I must finish this chapter. Can you possibly forgive me?" This came over the telephone once or twice at half-past seven. She was disappointed, but not in the least angry. Of course he had to work. But it was rather disconcerting. He had extraordinary ambitions, and tempered them with a habit of irony which reminded her of her father. Of course Mr. Tilford liked him immensely. Here was a serious young man of quality!

But he really wasn't so dreadfully serious! He was so bright and eager and casual, in fact, that his essential earnestness was almost a surprise to rediscover. Maybe his surface casualness explained why he was so popular with girls. Evidently he knew all sorts of girls. It hurt her exceedingly that apparently he had had other love affairs. Luckily, he didn't talk about them much. He did mention one girl whom he still knew well; her name was Martin. He shrugged, but evidently quite recently she had given him a bad time. But Joan shut all this from her mind.

She was a little disconcerted by Philip's wary, smiling, prescient caution. Of course this wasn't deliberate, but just the ordinary habit of his mind. He was the most scrupulous person! The way he tussled two hours with one sentence! Then she came to applaud his deliberation. Obviously he was no person for flirtation, anyway with some one like herself; and also, because his intuitions were immediate and acute, he must have seen from the beginning just how she felt. He didn't want to encourage her only to hurt her; he could not move, not an inch, until he, for himself, was also sure, as sure as she. Philip did not

say this. But she understood. Meantime, they might have to rework very slowly toward the climax which—in that lyric dream—almost had come at once.

They returned from a long drive north into the country.

"You make me so—so incredibly happy!" he exclaimed at the door, smiling, his absurd forehead up and atilt. "Joan, I've never met anyone like you before!"

She was dizzy. Alone upstairs, she tried to read, and found she could not read. "I'll know if I kiss him," she thought.

IV

They went to see Fay off.

She was on the way to New York, this time for good; "Judgment Jane" already had given her a certain reputation and she was willing to risk an eastward plunge. She would find, she thought, some job with some producer, reading manuscript or press-agenting. Besides, she said, she wanted to leave Chicago, to get away.

"I'm an eastward person—first California, then Nevada—school in Iowa—all these years here in the middle, in Chicago. I might as well finish up."

"An eastward quest," smiled Philip.

"Not a quest," Fay said. "I'm not so much looking for something new as trying to forget something old."

The train was lined up in the station gloom. Red-caps scudded with bags. The conductor called "All Aboard."

"I'll miss you," Joan said.

"You will not."

"I think I may come east this summer," said Joan.

"Be sure to bring him along." Fay pointed to Phil.

"I'm a workingman," Philip said.

"Well—you two—this is good-by." Fay stretched her

hand down. "Jesus! did I forget that cold cream? I say, Joan, do clean up my room—and by the way, I left the picture for you, the Zorn you like, the fat one. Phil, gotta match? Look here, when I come back, maybe I'll have to climb in the back door. You'll be here, won't you? You'll welcome me and all that? Oh—train's going. Take care of Joan, Philip. Good Heavens! I think I'm going to cry! I do feel this, Joan. Well, love to you. *Good-by*. I will miss you. *Good-by!*"

Mr. Tilford hustled up. He was late; he waved after the train. The three returned along the platform silently.

v

So this was it. Love. So this was what it did. Love. It didn't take very long to know, once it came. In the silly old days she had often wondered how it would come, how she would know. She laughed. She *knew*, all right! She knew so that it dazzled her, so that everything in her life was changed. There was glee to life now, and surely glee was the most delightful of all emotions. Here she was, it was six o'clock and she had had a good day, a good day because he would be at the house at seven, when they would dine together quietly, and then talk till midnight. There were these books he gave her and the first bulky half of the Roosevelt MS. which she was typing. She was not much of a typist; her finger tips were flat, her fingers ink-stained. And what a dreadful handwriting his was! But she loved it. That was it again. Love! It was frightening, to view calmly this immense silent thunder in her mind, to hear how it drowned from her mind everything else. Father—Pamela—Fay—who were they? Ghosts. There were only two people awake in the world to the joy of living. The rest were phantoms. This joy

of living was manifest in the smallest things; she felt not only that life was beautiful, but that she could seize it; life was like the lake sweeping over her, sluicing her with actuality. That slow dusk turning the water more deeply blue—that squat, sturdy robin in the garden—the powdering of stars in the clear night sky—these were things which always had been beautiful, but now they were something else besides, they were *real*. It was love making this change in her, love awakening all the whispers of her mind and lingering currents of her body to awareness. All her mind had been a troubled, restless cloud, and then love came like a flash of lightning through it, precipitating shafts of bright rain from a blue horizon. Her soul was raining. Not tears. It was raining a clear consciousness that life was good. Of course there was a paradox in all this. She was intensely awake, but also she felt she was cloudy. She felt herself in two perspectives, in two planes. She was like some finely sensitized film in a camera. Before she had been all reasonably clear, vague in detail, rounded in outline—a picture all in one tone, without depth. Now some one was fiddling with the lens and one part of her sailed up into the foreground—all that part was so clear she could see the sunlight lining and edging the shadows. She was all sharp black and white; there was no twilight in that part of her. The other part went out of focus slightly as the lens changed; it became dim and cloudy with the edges blurred and overlapping—that was the background. Sometimes, of course, even the sharp foreground altered slightly. Mostly it was clear as a bell, but sometimes the focus seemed to advance too far. That was when she questioned herself. Of course she had doubts sometimes. After all, what *was* this? It was love. Yes. What was love? She knew that all emotions of such intensity were fleeting, that by the fact of their

intensity they could not last. Was this a sonnet or an epic? How could she tell? Well, she decided—and she felt again that emotion of glee—it would be both. So this was it. Love. She wanted to hold Philip close and at the same time see him at the extremest distance possible. She wanted to touch him and drew vitality out of him into her, and then to give him back this vitality—his own—transformed. Here she was. It was almost 6:30 now; the dusk was deeper with a first star burning close to the water line. Downstairs she heard her father enter, and smelled deliciously the dinner Bessie was preparing. Here was all this close familiar life, this cognizance of beauty and order in familiar things. Now Philip was coming—invading them. Let him come, let him sack this citadel. “When the quotation marks are circled in red, omit them,” he had ordered. What a good book the Roosevelt book was! How quick and sure Philip was of what he wanted. Even his casual impulses were controlled—not controlled by volition, but miraculously adjusted to his life as a whole and directed with apparent fortuitousness to that which at the moment he desired. Joan for the tenth time that day savored his reality, tasted with smooth tongue a projected image of his reality. She wanted him so! It was terrifying the way a flame shot up into her, and then separated out into a bowl of flame and stayed there; a flame arose inside her and settled in her belly, and it looked just like a glowing tulip. As for him—in his aware up-cocked brow, the quick, slim, smooth speech, his delightful laughter—he too betrayed repressed emotion. But why didn’t he *do* something? Partly, of course, because he was above sensation-seeking. He was not a person to do much holding of hands. Even when he was away there was acute happiness in these reveries, happiness because she knew that always in reality he exceeded

the compliments of her imagination. Sometimes of course—rarely—the reveries were better than actuality. He did have moods. But she knew they were unimportant, entirely unimportant. What counted was that they should be perfect for each other at the right time for each other. The lens was focused precisely. She was all clear light and shadow and mostly light. She could feel wave and wave of light come into her mind, softly exploring it, bathing it, irradiating it. There was a torch in her mind which gave light but not heat. The heat was something else again. As far as her mind was concerned it was all clear, cool light. Philip was coming now in twenty minutes. Joan relaxed, sighed, and smiled. What would be his first words? What hers? Philip, she thought, was beautiful. He was orderly, too; in him she would find beauty and order combined, freedom and reason. Acutely, personally, she thought of him again. She put a mental arm around him. "Gee!" she said aloud, "I *love* him!"



Chapter Three



I

JOAN joined him one morning for an assignment which he said might be interesting.

"So this is what a police station looks like."

"Yes—pretty glum," Philip said.

"Extraordinarily dirty," she agreed. "Oughtn't there be a rule that the desk sergeant—is that what you call him?—should wear a collar? It's so undignified."

"There's little dignity in being arrested."

They were at East Chicago—the station around which for many blocks spread a web of sordidness, crime, squalor.

"Can we see the girl?" Philip asked a red-faced, unshaven policeman whose head protruded in the darkness like a flashlight.

"Yeh, if you want." He called down the stairs. "But she ain't sayin' much, I'm tellin' ye."

They progressed down a shaft. At the corner of each step pools of tobacco juice were formed like starfish. A negro guard conducted them. He wore no shirt under his coat. "Let this guy and the dame into thirty-seven," he said to the turnkey.

A girl sat in a corner of cell 37. Her eyes were tired and her lips a bright vermilion.

"Hello!" said Philip. "Not much of a boudoir, is it?"

"Nah."

"Want to tell us about it?"

Her face averted in the shadow she said, "Who the hell are you—the state's attorney?"

"Sure I'm the state's attorney," Phil admitted.

Joan peered through the bars. A stone floor; a bench and a straw mattress; a pail.

"Like hell you're the state's attorney."

"All right, I'm not the state's attorney."

The girl turned to Joan, "Say, you gotta handkerchief on you?"

Joan passed her a lacy embroidered square.

She blew her nose:

"I s'pose you're one of them newspaper guys."

"No, I'm the state's attorney. This lady is my assistant."

"Assistant hell."

"Let's look at you," Philip said. "And come on, tell us about it."

The girl turned and stood up, then moved against the bars. She was astonishingly pretty. "Can't be more than nineteen. Are you?" Philip asked.

"Nineteen hell," said the girl.

"It must have been a good show," he proffered. "Ever use a roscoe before?"

"What's roscoe?" Joan asked.

"Catch me answerin' questions like that," the girl said.

"Don't you want your picture in the paper?"

"Nah. Anyway, you ain't got no camera."

"You're up for the first hearing this morning—did you know?"

"My God! Sooner the better."

Philip little by little got the story from her.

"My God! Bumped him off, did I?"

The girl hadn't known the delicatessen-shop keeper on Kedzie Avenue had died.

"Don't worry. You're all right," said Phil. "Wait till the jury sees you."

More newspaper men arrived and a cordon of photographers. The corridor boomed with flashlight powder.

"Well, let's go," said Phil. "Eleven-fifty dead line."

Flapper bandit. So she had seen one!

"Roscoe means revolver," Philip said.

II

"Hurry!" called Philip into the telephone. "Three-eleven on Forty-seventh Street. Got the address? . . . That's right. I'll meet you at whatever is the nearest drug store."

Joan slid into her clothes and hailed a taxi in the boulevard and raced downtown.

The fire was a solid billow of smoke, like a waterfall. A flat curtain of smoke slowly settling downward concealed the whole building. When the curtain was torn she could see long shooting pennons of flame.

"Fine fire," Phil said. "Now stay back here. I don't mean there's any danger from the fire. But there is from the water. The hoses knock you flat."

He was darting around, and from behind the barricade she watched. He ducked to avoid a splash of water and then appeared next to a helmeted battalion chief. He looked slim and strange not in a rubber coat. He ducked again, but this time the water doused him. He sprawled and waved, and then disappeared with several firemen toward the building. Joan's fingers closed on her palms.

She waited. She saw him again laughing and giving one of the firemen a cigarette.

"Now don't pay any attention to anything else, but watch that wall."

"Which one? Oh yes—I see."

The smoke was lifting, and behind it she saw a confusion of fire, of demolished brick, of gnarled and burning timbers.

"Watch it!"

"It is going to—Phil!—it's falling!"

The wall fell as a whole. It did not crumble but fell like a piece of cardboard slanting. As the angle of deflection increased loose bricks began to tumble from the top. It still fell slowly and flatly. Then it buckled toward the middle and sagged. The top part overtook the bottom and reached the ground at the same time, whilst the middle piled upward. The crash almost rolled you over. Then came an immense pall of dust and writhing flames and firemen dragging long hoses leaping.

"Fine fire," Philip repeated.

The smoke was high in the air now, smooth and still like a gigantic parasol.

"If no one is going to be killed, I'm all for the fire," Joan said.

III

Philip introduced her usually as a new reporter on his paper. "So that's what I am—a sob sister," she laughed. She was used to his sudden telephone calls now—in fact, she found herself saving her mornings, waiting for them. "Union station at ten-forty-five," he telephoned. "We'll do some major interviewing."

The trainshed was a tunnel of gloom; at the far end

flat planes of sunlight crossed angularly. A long line of shining Pullmans stood ready tiptoeing to depart. An incoming engineer leaned from his cab and grinned. What a beautiful building this was!—the long upward sweep of the girders, the unfinished steel of the structure work, the glittering lines of track.

"He ought to be a pretty good story," Phil said.

"I don't know who he is."

"Gabriel Mudd? Sir Gabriel Mudd? Man who dug up Chalcydon—greatest living archæologist."

"I'm not keen on archæology. I like live things."

"Nonsense! There has to be a background."

"Yes, but it does seem absurd. Why not let sleeping mummies sleep?"

"And you with a scientific mind," Philip mocked. "I'm disgusted. Hello! Here's the train."

They hopped along the platform, scanning eagerly each car, each window.

"Do you know what this beggar looks like?" asked a colleague.

"You can't miss him," Philip replied. "Not a British archæologist here on a lecture tour."

The photographers lined up at the platform barrier, their machines ready, the little jiggers for exploding the flash powder held at arm's length. Queer race, newspaper photographers—saw life exclusively as a series of pictures. Far down the platform and no archæologist yet. Then some one spotted him.

The reporters asked polite questions all at once:

"Is Chalcydon in Asia or in Africa, may I ask, Sir Gabriel?"

"Did you find anything really sensational—any mummies, say, with bobbed hair—anything like that?"

"What's the weather like down there—pretty hot?"

"Are you a member of the English peerage, Sir Gabriel?"

"Listen—about these layers you speak of—Hittite and then Assyrian and the Phœnician and then Hebrew—what do you mean *layers*?"

"What do you think of prohibition, Sir Gabriel?"

The great archæologist, beautifully dressed in a pink shirt with shiny collar to match, a double-breasted white vest, a tweed coat with enormous slanting lapels, and violet spats—no one missed the spats—tried to answer as many questions as possible, hem-hemmed a good deal, signed a few autographs, twiddled his eye-glass, was extremely affable and a little bewildered, and then strode with his retainers down the platform.

The photographers caught him.

"Hey—Sir Mudd!"

"This way—your nose higher ——"

"Sir *Mudd*—wait a moment!"

"Your face sideways!"

"Sir Mudd!"

"I say!" remonstrated the archæologist.

"I say," yelled a photographer, "Didja hear him? He said, *I say*. Now—face up, Sir *Mudd*!"

Phil and Joan had a cup of coffee, laughing, nodding.

IV

"Do you want to do something a little dangerous?"

She was too full for speech these days; she looked up; she smiled.

"Meet me in the car—no, pick me up at the flat—about two-thirty tomorrow morning."

She rustled up to his flat, climbed out, and rang; he was down in a moment, and with him two friends, one a beak-nosed young man who nodded to her and said nothing, and smelled of liquor slightly; the other a big beaming-faced boy with black hair parted in the middle and tortoise-shell glasses. They were roughly dressed.

"We're going to show you some hijacking—maybe," the big boy said.

"I hope to God not," Philip remarked.

They slid silently into the car.

Joan drove south, then west, then south again, many miles.

"Leave the car here," said the beak-faced one.

They walked swiftly, creeping where the road was high and the light clear.

"Now this looks likely."

They crouched in the high grass. Before them the Sag Road spun out its length into gray distance.

They did not have long to wait.

"Sssshh!" whispered Phil.

"Phut-phut," came the purr of a motorcycle.

A motorcyclist bumped along the road, very slowly. Another man was in the side-car. It looked like a rifle he carried.

"The Valley gang," the fat, beaming boy whispered.

Behind them came another motorcycle, carrying men in uniform this time, again with guns.

Then slowly, cautiously, headlights turned out, a series of trucks rumbled with infinite precision along the road; piled high with barrels, moving hills of barrels. There were two men on each front seat, one to drive. Skirting the road, other motorcyclists phut-phutted, bent outward toward the grass.

"For God's sake don't budge!" Joan just heard Philip whisper.

The caravan was barely visible. In the dim light each truck loomed suddenly, in profile looking like a scalloped dinosaur. Then it disappeared, to be followed at slow, measured interval by another, and yet another, all in single file, with the motorcycle outriders adding a staccato ripple to the slow drone of the truck engines. Slowly, menacingly, twenty trucks passed. Then came a little car filled with men, a fast-darting car hard put to it to follow so slowly. Then silence again, and only violet shadows in the gloom. A booze caravan. Into Chicago by the Sag Road.

"Night after night like this," Philip said.

"No hijackers so far tonight."

"Armed raiders are supposed to be in ambush along here, to seize the outfit, run it in themselves," Philip explained.

"Let's run back to our car and follow," she suggested, eagerly.

"Not me." The beak-nosed man laughed shortly.

"No, we'll wait." Philip laughed too. "Then slip into town quietly."

"Where would the hijackers be?"

"Around here somewhere."

The big beaming-faced boy laughed.

"Men, that delivery ought to bring down the price a little."

Joan felt in a dream. Spice into Damascus. Jade careening into Samarkand. Rugs, figs, olive oil, jasper, across the plain to Ispahan. And booze to Halstead Street.

"By the way, what were the uniformed men?"

Phil chuckled.

"Police. In the pay of the Valley. Seeing the stuff get in."

v

A Rotary lunch.

"Sure, this is ladies' day. Here's a badge. You can get in."

Joan found herself wearing a large celluloid disk. It read, across the middle, "Helena P. Stevens"; at the top, semicircularly, "Stevie"; at the bottom, "Aluminum Kitchen Ware."

For lunch they ate crab-meat cocktail; okra soup; fried lake perch; chicken à la Maryland; succotash; fruit salad; baked Alaska.

The room was full of smoke; back-slapping men; excited ladies; celluloid disks blinking; speeches; sweat; the clatter of dishes; smiles.

They got up to sing:

"So louder now my song I'll swell,
Rotary, my Rotary.
And make it ring o'er hill and dell,
Rotary, my Rotary."

It was to the tune of "Maryland, My Maryland." Then came "Juniata":

"Rotarian lady,
Offer we our greeting song.
To each fair lady
Here's a welcome strong,
'Round our hearts you're twining
Innocent, yet potent spells,
And your eyes' bright shining
Soon Rotary tells."

"Wonderful," thought Phil.

VI

These were the two boys then. Joan sat in the press box and watched them. They were sitting in a little depression, on wicker chairs; both sallow, extremely well dressed, sullen, smiling.

The great attorney strolled back and forth, round and about, shaking his mane of gray hair off his forehead, twiddling his suspenders at the trousers. It was hot. Even the judge was in shirt sleeves. The prosecutor was a sandy-haired man with a ringing, metallic voice and a permanent sneer to his lips; his nose splashed over his face like a confused disaster. The other attorneys were banked five-deep. The judge sat, his mouth hidden in his fist. When he spoke the fist never moved.

Behind the attorneys, bailiffs, court reporters, clerks, came a series of semicircular rising benches, like the seats in an amphitheater. There sat the old father of the murdered boy, impassive, Judaic, vengeance on him, never moving during all the hot, crowded session; the elder brother of one of the murderers, the father of the other, their faces spare and gray; the eager, whispering witnesses. A file of psychiatrists crouched to one side. Behind them was the crowd, stirring but not intense. Some of them were eating peanuts. The sun beat through the tall windows.

In the press box were two dozen reporters all in shirt sleeves, tapping out the running story on noiseless typewriters. They wrote directly on their machines a summary of speech or plea; those working for afternoon newspapers added every half hour a brief summary to head the new edition. Telegraph boys were crouching under the desks. The telegraph operators were in the

next box; silently they took sheets of copy from the typewriters and tapped them off on noiseless instruments. Further behind were the camera men.

"Nah!" yelled the prosecutor. "Not blood on their hands. Just jam. Jam!"

The old lion of the defense for all of a brilliant morning had been resurrecting the childhood of the boys. The prosecutor was a little impatient. His metallic voice creaked. After all, this trial was in its fifth week now. It was almost time for electioneering to begin. Hang the boys—office for another four years. The defense attorney was grave, alert, adroit; never lost his temper, never lost his infinite, calculating patience. Joan watched them. Not so much a play as it first seemed. Rather a military campaign. Two generals. The stake? Two lives.

One of the alienists took the stand.

"See him there," Philip pointed. "Four hundred dollars per day for his services—that's the fee."

"Really? I'm going to be an alienist."

The day dragged on, like a noose wide at first which slowly tightened; you were fresh and eager and curious at the beginning, now a pressure was tight around you; the intensity increased and cumulated till you felt you couldn't breathe. The strained, ringing voices, the sun beating in from the tall windows, the hungry crowd, the silent mechanical tapping of Philip and the other reporters—you couldn't stand it, not a moment longer; it *pressed* on you —

"Let's go," said Joan.

"No, I must stay."

Two lives for a life. Reasonable, was it?

Court finally adjourned; the boys were manacled and led out, with a group of husky bailiffs bulwarking them

from the crowd, hustling them out of sight almost before you know they were gone. Defense attorney and prosecutor looked at one another grimly.

"We'll get the dirty bastards, hang 'em," said the prosecutor.

"Yes, a good day, a quiet day; everything is fine," the defense man said to Phil.

VII

Other incidents.

Philip on a police boat, in the colorful dawn of a marvelous April morning, Joan still sleepy and yawning, listening to the way these policemen talked. What an argot! It was a new language. She must remember "doing a stretch" and "the stir."

The grappling irons went down, sweeping the scum of the green river. The boat butted its nose into the perverse backward current. This was the place. The crew veered the squat boat into position, started dredging, dragging. How quickly all this hardened you. No, not at all; it made you hypersensitive. Look at Philip. His nostrils quivering. The clanging irons went down again.

Sunrise was dancing all over the green water. The water trembled and shone, imprisoning the sunrise. The irons clanked and swirled.

"No, farther up," the captain said.

"Well, they saw her jump off right here."

"Current," explained the captain.

The boat edged forward. The rose-green water beckoned.

Out on election night. That was the night the whole staff worked. The city was charted, each man having a ward or two to cover; joggling in taxis, they clanked from

precinct to precinct, from one polling-place to the next, telephoning in the figures, giving the figures to the poised, ready presses. "Extry! Extry!" The presses moved, the papers flooded the streets, hustling men crowded the sidewalks, running. "Extry! Extry!" You read and found then that Simon J. Slivovitz had won the Thirty-third Ward by 107 votes.

Joan and Phil were on the South Side beyond Ninety-sixth Street, out into the dim region where street addresses came in five numbers. What a lot about Chicago she was learning. What a sensational city it was. They snatched dinner at a Chinese restaurant at Eighty-third and Cottage Grove, and began to work. Rocking in the taxi, they reached an address, jolted up rickety stairs—found knots of men raveling around the ballot boxes. "Stuffing them," explained Philip. They got the returns, dashed to the phones, then on to the next.

After an hour Phil could see how it was going.

"Let's go down to the lake," he said. "I feel like meditating in company—upon my sins. As to the rest of these figures, we'll invent 'em."

The immense human interest of a place like South Clark. That was a police court. They sat next to the judge; the judge admired Joan rather more intently than he listened to his case. He was a good judge, but as yet spoke English extremely imperfectly. "Ten days in de county chail," he would say. He said that to the big nigger with the black eye. That same day came up the girl who had been raped by a police officer, the waiter who shot a customer who hadn't tipped him, the quivering boy caught in the crap game, and the funny story of the man who lost his horse. "Ach! There should not be horses left yet," exclaimed the judge.

What fun interviews could be. Joan marveled at the

straight face Philip kept while politely insisting that the president of the university should give his views on plastic surgery; at the whole story of General Kronpetokoff, ex-cavalry officer in the Tsar's Imperial Guard, now running a stable back of Archer Avenue; at all the host of movie stars, visiting statesmen, junketing Cabinet Ministers, magicians, chiropractors, eminent tree-surgeons, Wall Street gamblers, frightened scientists, convicted murderesses, swindlers, princes, child prodigies, and amazed, bewildered literati from other shores—whom Philip met almost daily at the trains.

VIII

They walked straight into an almost major murder one morning. After lunch at the Tip-Top they were walking quietly down Michigan Boulevard. Two gloved young men sauntered into a theater lobby, shot the cashier, and walked out again. Joan and Phil heard the shots and rushed in. The two young men had disappeared. Policemen came; doctors hurried; the crowd yelped. No one knew what to do. Philip telephoned Dearborn 0000.

But the story didn't carry the paper; something else took the banner line. Things were happening in Washington; the headline-writer yawned over the smudged copy. DOHENY IN WHITE WASH TUB, he penciled, counting the letters automatically, SPLUTTERS VAINLY.

Philip was assistant literary editor at this time, helping with the book page in the afternoons; sometimes on Thursday nights he stayed late to make up the literary section. He copy-read his stuff; wrote the headlines; found half-column cuts and portraits; meditated to whom he should give the leading review; went to the composing

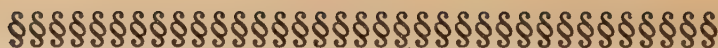
room and watched the make-up men juggle type at the stone. Sometimes on Thursday nights Joan came downtown to have dinner with him. After the page was made up and put to bed, on alternate Thursdays he had a radio talk to give, from the paper's new broadcasting station, and it was fun for her to sit in the next room and not see him and listen.

One of these evenings on the way home in the cab he said, abruptly:

"Isn't it about time ——?"

He bent to her; she felt quick, frightened joy; he kissed her.

"Oh, Philip!" she cried. "Philip—my darling! I'm so happy!"



Chapter Four



I

PHILIP had ideas, of course, about everything on earth. He had no convictions, however, he asserted; he was a skeptic and it sufficed him to inquire, to elucidate, perhaps occasionally to commend. Joan always argued, when a matter of conviction came around, because she *had* convictions.

"It may seem strange to begin a conversation about Mussolini with the name Lenin." Or, "What Baldwin brought to this greatest opportunity in modern England was a pipe and a taste in pigs." Philip liked West End clubs, he said laughing, because they were just like American bathrooms—in other words, the best thing possible of their kind. He said something exciting one night about vitality and soda-water, but Joan couldn't recollect it later.

"After all," Philip would lean forward, "what I want to do is make my life a relentless pursuit of experience. As I've said, I was born with very little imagination, and if I can't create, at least I can observe and correlate and classify and *experience*." He paused. "The real point is how far experience is valuable. I dare say self-development can be overdone. One may reach a point of self-

development from which the only step forward is self-sacrifice."

Joan wasn't sure. Was that a new idea?

"Ambition is a strange thing. I dare say the best way to forecast your life, to chart it and walk the chart, would be to set an eventual ambition and set it just as far and high as possible. If you're a lawyer, work for the Supreme Court; if you're in politics, go for the Presidency; if you write, be the best writer of your generation—century."

He crossed his legs, leaning forward.

"Plan it all out. Make it definite. Assemble experience strictly relevant to it. And after charting your course and setting your aim for the very highest and remotest peak, then, *then*, be quite sure to recognize in your own mind—from the very beginning—the extreme probability that you'll fail."

"Fail?"

"Sure. Know that certainly. Know that you can't *ever* attain the ultimate ambition. Know that as surely as you keep on knowing what the ultimate is. Then, of course, *try* to go on—try to win. But realize it is extremely unlikely. Thus all your life you'll have both the zest of ambition and the satisfaction of accomplishment. When life is over, measure the distance still remaining to the goal, and know that you did your utmost and that the course was good."

"You're rather a defeatist."

"Oh, not at all."

"It doesn't sound reasonable."

"I think it's a quite plausible and workable philosophy."

She cupped her chin.

"Of course a year from now I may remember what I've said—which is unlikely—and call it nonsense."

"It'll depend on how successful you are," she ventured, shrewdly.

"That's true. Or how unsuccessful."

"I'm not convinced," Joan said. "I'll think it over."

"There are all sorts of love," he declared one evening. "One might classify them by color. Red love and purple love and orange love. As one gets older there are gray and violet loves. If something goes wrong there may be poisonous green and yellow loves. A mother's love for a child?—I dare say blue. And of course there are all sorts of variations in hue and tone, even when loving the same person. And of course it's perfectly possible to love several persons at the same time."

"Oh, I dare say!"

"Or perhaps there is a better analogy. Maybe loves are a matter of voltages."

"No, I don't agree with you there; that would be a difference in intensity, not in kind."

"Yes—right—but suppose."

He talked and she listened. Sometimes she was uneasy when he talked of love. He didn't ever mention other girls by name, but she knew—it was obvious—he had loved other girls. It had a curious effect on her, knowing about these others. She was not revolted or apprehensive; she was simply frozen. She hoped in desperate secrecy that perhaps these other love affairs weren't *really* love affairs—then admitted that of course they were. In defense she refused utterly to countenance any hint or recollection that any of them—of whatever kind—had existed. She knew nothing about them. They had not happened. The notion of—say—meeting in the flesh some day some one whom Philip—say it—had slept with—that was utterly unbearable. So Joan swallowed her fears, clamped her mouth shut. It was not that she had any special fetich

for chastity. Simply chastity existed in her on the same terms as her backbone.

"So, considering it logically, there's no reason why you or I shouldn't love forty people before we die."

"Forty—that would be quite a lot," Joan had to say.

"I suppose"—he laughed apologetically—"you'll hold that against me—as a dare, perhaps?"

"No." She laughed, too, a little shortly. "I want to forget it." The laugh shortened to a smile. "I've only fallen in love once. I'm afraid it'll last me a long time." Joan flushed saying this; he did not smile.

Usually she had all sorts of things ready to say when he came, and then found it was so much pleasure listening to him that she forgot to say them. But sometimes he made her talk.

"Well, yes," she said, "I've tried too to give some direction to my life—so far as that's possible. I'm not so sure as you that it is. I think life just happens. I'm pretty young. You're twenty-seven, aren't you? That's five years' difference."

"Nonsense!" he said at once. "You're older than I. You have all the symptoms. Gravity. Serenity."

"I'm not grave. I laugh much more'n you do. I like to be serene, maybe. But I'm really not! Have I any feeling that I'm important? Sure. Haven't you? I remember," she reminisced a moment, "how funny and reliant I was as a kid—must have felt myself as a real individual even then. I felt I counted, somehow. Maybe it was because I always had what I wanted. I was so spoiled! Well, now, I wonder, was I? Just before you came I decided to break away because I wanted some other things which I couldn't get here. I was going to England and Paris and break loose."

"Joan breaking loose," he murmured, smiling.

"You don't know!"

"I think I do."

"I wanted to get away," she continued seriously, "because I had reached some sort of full stop. I'd finished a sort of cycle of taking things. I wasn't specially selfish—still, what I wanted I took. Now I feel that the old round of just being receptive is over. What I want to do now is *give*. But I want to give in such a way that my own character will get bigger and finer and more valid. In other words"—Joan looked up with a sudden phrase—"by giving to some one I want in the long run to give part of myself back to myself. You see?"

He nodded.

"I s'pose I'm hopelessly vague. You can talk about these things fairly clearly. I can't, somehow. What I want to say is this. I want to see my life clear before me and be perfect to myself—through giving it all to some one else. I want my individuality—that's a horrible word—completed by something. Something beautiful. But I don't want it broken." She smiled in a different voice. "This is an awful give-away, isn't it?"

"Go on."

"I don't want to be bowled over and just sucked into some one and disappear. I'm too much of an aristocrat for that. Aristocrat?" She smiled. "Oh yes!" He encouraged her. "So you see talking about ambition—and so on—is rather profound—to me. It's all been coming over me these past weeks." Her voice lowered. "So here my life is. And, you see, I don't want it spoiled."

Soon it was time to say good night.

"My dear, good night. Kiss me."

Imagine! *Asking* to kiss her!

II

Her father was in a great state. Naturally.

"Of course you don't need to tell me a word," he volunteered, coming up to her in the library one evening. "I know. You're in love. My child, it shows in your very walk."

There were so many things to say it was impossible to say anything.

"Maybe I should pretend to be surprised," Mr. Tilford gestured sagely. "But the fact is I'm not in the least surprised; I'm pleased."

"What shall I do, father?"

"What do you want to do?"

"Oh—can't tell you."

"I know all about it, sweetheart. I'm in love, too."

"Of course you are, father. With me."

He chuckled and, smiling, slid down the window-seat closer.

"Of course," Joan went on seriously, "there isn't anything to *do*. I'm so happy! Father, you can't know. I'm happy!"

When she told her father about Philip she praised him and then desperately wanted her father to agree with her, to echo the praise, to add excitingly to it. She would wait eagerly at the ends of her sentences, waiting for him to pick them up and go on. For everything pleasant about Philip he must say something pleasant too. It was a let-down when he only agreed with her.

No longer would her father be blank at breakfast and dinner—waiting for her to give some sign so that he could outwardly understand, giving expression to what she knew he must know. Now he would touch her hand

slightly in passing; he would smile, and maybe wink once in a while. And it was so lucky—Philip liked him so much.

Pamela called from the stair, "Telephone!"

"Guess who," Pamela said. She was ragging Joan unmercifully these days.

"Your turn will come!" Mr. Tilford would turn to Pamela severely.

He felt that something was passing—how old was Joan now?—what would this young man do to her, make of her?—

Joan slipped toward the telephone. Pamela was hiding in a corner. "Get *out*!" Joan hissed.

III

It was probably only in America that any two people could be so casually intimate without reaching real intimacy; without talking about it, apparently, or even thinking about it. There was no definition in their relations at all. Neither so far had even dreamed that any definition was necessary. They had this casual intimacy. What else was there?

Oh, but there was something else! They both saw some modicum of tension rising between them, compounded, of course, both of desire and inhibition, so that as their intimacy grew it remained incomplete, with the magnet of completion always advancing a little closer toward them. They did not reach their hands forward urgently—yet. Why should they? This was all too utterly delightful as it was. Let them play a little longer with futurity—let them drift——

But—this strain *was* growing. Joan felt it. She was impatient for him to feel it, too. Apparently he did—

sure—but he refused to let it budge him. Instead, he expressed ardor in crazy jokes, in wild wind-swept conversation on the beach. And now she felt she could not bear to be separated from him for half a day, not for an hour.

Well, no such separation—soon—would be admissible. It was obvious they must be together always. Joan wondered, and almost for the first time turned her mind seriously to the future. What *were* they going to do? That answer was obvious, too. It was all settled really. They loved each other. They would marry—of course.

And why worry now? It was all too delightful, day-by-day drifting. Let them drift.

IV

At his flat she dropped in one day for tea—she had a key—and sat quiet and gay in his leather armchair, her feet tapping a tune on the floor, waiting for him to come. He drifted in at 4:15, kissed her cheeks into a blush, sat down and stretched and sighed and smiled.

"Real spring now, Joan."

"I swam this morning. I dare say that's why I feel so gay and lazy."

"Is it too late for a dip now?"

"I don't want to swim now."

"I have the Chauve-Souris tickets for tomorrow."

"Tomorrow? That's Friday. Good." He sat down on the arm of the chair, his outer leg swinging. "Philip darling—it's still exciting to call you darling."

"Ha! Is it?"

"It's ridiculous," said Joan, "to be so happy."

"By the way, I was out today for a while—an awfully

jolly little assignment—saw a great, hook-nosed fellow here from Persia. In fact, he was an actual grand vizier.”

“Philip darling—it’s such a wonderful day—a grand vizier—really!”

“Sweet—you taste sweet.”

Philip had had a good bit of news the day before. Scribners had accepted tentatively the Roosevelt book.

“Sweet yourself.”

He came closer, and when he kissed her she steadied herself, pointing her toe to the floor, going taut. Then however she slipped from him and walked to the window, looking out distantly, saying nothing. In her heart drummed: “I love him! I love him!”

Philip was circling around the room, smoking, talking.

“Good old back.”

Joan bent inward with her hands on the sill, tossed her square head back.

“It’s such a beautiful day.”

“You know, it’s clearly apparent, this business of having great problems in your life is all bosh. Run right through the roster of great people and you find that what really worried them were not the big things at all. Napoleon didn’t think half so much of Austerlitz or Jena as he did about getting fat. Same with T. R. I dare say it’s true of most people. Let’s be different, Joan. Let’s have only big problems.”

She was away from the window, still lazy, still gay. She hummed a little and circled the room too; picked up a book and dropped it; looked out of the window again. “It’s such a beautiful day. Let’s go out of doors. Oh, I must make tea first. I don’t want to make tea. I don’t want to do anything.”

He made the tea, talking from the other room.

She followed him to the kitchen, and sat on the table

with her legs dangling. She was in a neat soft blue dress with a round circle of collar at the throat.

"Philip—old darling."

He was busy with the tea things; bent up and brushed her hair with his lips.

"It's such a beautiful day."

"Yes—fine."

When she wanted something as badly as this it was really very, very hard to put it into words.

"O Lord! I wonder why I feel this way."

"What way?"

"Oh—tra-la-la-la—nothing. Yes, one sugar."

"I forgot to mention—in the last chapter—did you like the line. He had a profoundly paradoxical intelligence, an immensely big mind—for little things."

How extraordinarily dull Philip could be at times. Made her love him more.

They sat down to tea. He kissed her first and she wanted so passionately to kiss him with passion that she withdrew a little, shy, afraid to show him her desire. He did not understand and withdrew himself. He poured the tea. She said:

"Oh, Philip, things are singing in me!"

"Yes?"

"I suppose it's the spring. No, it isn't. Oh—come on out and walk."

In her mind something was purring, this is the moment, this is the moment. Don't let it pass this time—don't let it pass.

"Walk—sure."

"Oh well—let's not walk."

"I have a lot of new ideas about biography," he said, restlessly poking about the room,

She didn't hear very clearly his alert, acute, quite long

discussion of biography. In her mind she felt glee and a little fear and sensual laziness. Let him taste the dripping silver honey of her mood—quickly now—quickly ——

"Oh, Philip! Philip!"

He kissed her, but again she was excited and frightened and, not wanting him to withdraw, she made him withdraw. They were silent several moments.

"It's six. I ought to work."

Work?

She was at the window again, looking out vacantly. It was hard to keep her heels quiet—if she did so and so she went taut so and so—and then relaxed. Now—now ——

"I really must work," Philip said.

Joan turned and was about to smile liquidly and tell him, but then she decided, No, she couldn't make any such quite frontal advance. And, anyway, what did it matter? Today was today; tomorrow would be another day. There was no hurry.

"All right. I'll let you work."

Laughter.

Pity these things weren't always mutual. But what did it matter? Let them drift—let life come on.

v

"Look here, Joan! I've fallen in love with you—yes! I love you!—yes! Now what are we going to do?"

He burst out with that instantly after he had burst into the house—very late—one later evening. His face was exploding.

"I'll be frank—I want to be. So far I haven't said anything because I've been so puzzled and alarmed. But now, Joan—my dear—we've got to get this straight!"

She blinked. He buried her with a kiss.

"Philip!" she whispered. "What did you say then? Love?"

It made her unbearably happy. This was the first time he had said love in words. Of course it hadn't been necessary. She hadn't said it, either.

"Oh, Philip! I'm so glad you said that. Love! I'm in love, too, Philip. I love you, Philip."

He looked at her. She tried to smile. He kissed her.

"D'you remember—once you talked about colors of love. What's my color, Philip? D'you remember—about colors——?"

He turned quickly. "My dear, it's all colors. It's every color. It's a rainbow—a—a cloudburst—a—a sun!"

"Oh! I'll tell you some day—what my color is for you, Philip. I'll tell you——" Her voice, whispering, was barely audible.

"But," he insisted, "Joan, I'm in a terrible state. We've got to *talk* about this—before it goes any further——"

"Talk? What's there to talk about?" She paused, smiling, her face steady. "There's only one thing I want to say."

"I've fallen in love with you!" He repeated it again. "It's quite wonderful! Who on earth could have dreamed it would happen?" He jumped up, stirring as if wonder-struck. "My God! I shall write you a litany!" His voice lowered. "I'll show you. We'll walk in sand like pilgrims to Damascus. We'll see the lights on the Acropolis, dancing in the distance like topaz tears!" He stopped. His face was still exploding. "But there aren't any lights on the Acropolis. I forget. I'm forgetting everything. Joan! Joan!"

"Why didn't you talk about love before, Philip?"

"Frightened." He looked at her frankly. "Yes. I had

no idea all this was going to happen. I felt it might happen—that night in the dream—but I made myself forget the dream. Why? Well, that's what it's so important to explain. So you thought I've been simply calm and preoccupied and direct! Lord! Joan, I've been going through the most extraordinary three weeks! You see, I wanted to be friends. You see, I had decided to abolish love. It's hurt me too much—in the past. I can't afford to love. And even during these weeks I couldn't keep away from you; I felt myself day by day slipping deeper and deeper toward you—but I refused to believe I loved you. Until now. Just now."

"Oh, don't talk," she protested, happily. "What does it matter now?" He looked at her, saw devotion in her eyes; he still looked actually shaken. "There's a lot of time for all you want to say. I want to say a lot, too."

"Lord help me," he murmured, "this is the most extraordinary thing. For the first time in my life, I don't trust myself."

"Darling, darling, trust me."

"I'll have to," Philip said. He smiled tenderly, as if he agreed from wider and less fortunate experience. "My dear—I must simply refuse to admit it—you're all life to me."

"Ha!—doubt that!" bantered Joan.

"I want to taste you and smell you and eat you," Philip said.

She smiled: "I want you to say these things!"

Philip took her palm in his hand; felt her fingers and the palm, and then cupped the palm; sank his chin into the cupped palm and then curved it over his lips, searching it. She trembled. He shuddered and jumped up. "Sit quietly—sweet—sweet——" she implored.

Almost quietly later, methodically, he explored her face.

There was her hair, bluish-dark, wide and square at the brow and sharp across the cheeks; then her eyes smiling, direct, and ridiculously, childish blue, moist almost as if she had been crying, but very clear; the closely modeled cheeks; the lips red and apart slightly over the white, blue-white teeth. He explored her face, he caressed it; his hands were on her face. Then it was more than desire he expressed, he was taking; sudden pressure separated her lips. "I didn't know there could be kisses like that," she thought, almost mournfully, wondering, feeling all of her body astir, her body trembling.

Then he was up again, shaking his head violently; he still looked as if he were struggling with something. Dear Philip! Scrupulous Philip! He came back, not composed, looking at her, a question now in his eyes. She shivered, knowing what he meant; she shook her head. She was too scared. He stood there. With a violent gesture he whirled around, his head for a second in his hands. "My God!" he exclaimed again, staring, apparently not at her—at himself. She smiled, as if beckoningly, not to something immediate, but to something inevitable and soon. They sat down again. He was not smoking.

She let her head down to his coat lapel, not sensually, but with a gesture almost of fatigue; he took her head and kissed it quietly; she could feel his lips on her hair. Looking up, she saw the strong muscles under his chin clear in the light and not so tense now, quieter, relaxed. It was the queerest thing—looking sideways this way. How many kisses would it take, from his left shoulder here to the other—six—nine? She had a wild temptation; his skin was just visible under a buttonhole a little awry. She closed her teeth.

"But look here!" His voice was tense again. He was extremely earnest. "Joan, listen! We don't know what

we're in for—we must be honest about this. Now there's one thing I want to explain ——”

Mr. Tilford entered the room, benevolently peering. He drew back for an instant, then paced forward.

“Hello, dad!”

“Well, Mr. Tilford!”

Mr. Tilford did not want to withdraw at once, which would have been awkward; he sat gayly and talked, and appeared not to notice how Philip—at this interruption—first squirmed, and then put forward his hands in a slight gesture of helpless acquiescence to the course of events. Joan was affectionate to her father, liking it that never, never did he wear an impossible-in-my-own-daughter air.

Mr. Tilford left. Philip went home soon after. He hung irresolute a moment, then, Joan saw, could not resurrect his former mood.

Joan followed him to the porch, and from the window watched him down the street. Upstairs, later, she felt like a sonnet ending on the thirteenth line.



Chapter Five



I

PHILIP was on the rewrite desk these days. That is, he sat at a telephone, listening to reporters out on fast running stories, scribbling on yellow copy-paper as fast as they could talk:

"About twenty-six. . . . Good-looking? . . . Yes, silk stockings, that's right. . . . Humboldt Park at midnight. . . . Police there right away? . . . Through the temple—yes. . . . No identification at all? That's funny. . . . Oh, they found the gun there. Well, suicide, probably. . . . Yes, better go out. Call again——"

Out of such skeletons it was his business to write a descriptive story. He sat at a knot of desks with three other rewrite men. Between stories they fiddled through rival newspapers or jibed the city editor a few yards away.

"How many heads you got?" called this dignitary.

"Two," replied Philip.

This was not an insulting reference to Philip's anatomical structure, but a request for the number of stories he had worthy of top headlines.

"Two-four on the suicide," the city editor ordered.

Philip raked his typewriter to and fro. It was about 9:30 and this was the time Joan would be having break-

fast. Soon it was time for him, too, to run out for a cup of coffee at Weeghman's. He always telephoned Joan at about 10, after he had had his coffee.

What did the darned girl mean, falling in love with him this way? What had he done to provoke her? Philip's brow corrugated. What did *he* mean, falling in love with her this way? What had she done to incite him?

He yanked the little story about the suicide out of the machine. "Here, hot story." He shot it ironically across the desk to the city editor. "Philip, do me three hundred on this." Back across the desk came a smudged and wrinkled clipping.

Philip finished and walked down the room to the telephone booths. Might as well call her now. It excited him still so that he quivered even to call her number on the phone. Every morning he struggled with himself, waiting to call her, wanting to call her sooner.

Oh! he protested to himself. He pressed his palm close over his eyebrows, rubbing it back and forth. What was he going to do? How in thunder had they slipped along this way so rapidly, so inevitably? She loved him. He loved her. Good Lord!

Out of a corner of his eye he saw the humorous Mr. Jones arrive. Mr. Jones snorted around the room friendlily, then dove behind his translucently glassed door. "Hubbard!" City editor calling him. He walked back to his typewriter and took a brief story.

It wasn't his fault. Nor hers. He had done everything possible so that she would not commit herself. He had done this with effort, because it was the right thing to do. Fool he was! Might have known it would happen! Again his palm pressed his upper cheeks, his brow: he pressed till his eyes seemed bruised.

It was all right to fall in love with a girl like Martin. Sure. He himself got hurt. Not she. That was all right. It was all right to fall in love with a girl like Fay. He got hurt. Not she. That was all right. But Joan! With her it was different. It was unbearable even to think of the slightest chance of hurting her. She didn't know anything about anything—she was too fine and free and candid. It didn't matter what she did to him—he could stand it—but he must *not* hurt her.

What she would do to him? It would be plenty. He knew. Fool he was!—falling in love again—*loving* some one. He did love her. There was no faintest doubt of that. He was back at the phone again, and this time had the booth door open. Good Heavens! every morning this frenzy—just to telephone and say hello! Good Heavens—*what* to do?

“Hubbard!”

That was Mr. Jones's voice, humorously booming. Philip turned toward his editor's room. He saw through the glass Mr. Jones looked severe and was fingering a telegram.

“Getting a bit rusty here, eh, Philip?” Mr. Jones immediately launched into discussion of a project. “This office has a fine sense of public shiftlessness. Now ——”

Philip paid attention. But what *was* he going to do? He couldn't marry. That was obvious. What else was there?

II

Joan had just finished breakfast when the telephone rang.

“Hello, Joan! Listen.” His voice was excited. She

listened. "I've got to go to California—probably on a three-twenty train this afternoon. May I see you?"

Well, well, Joan thought, this was rather fine. She had been seeing almost too much of him. This brought matters to a head. For she had made up her mind—now that he had spoken—let her carry them forward by speaking too.

But directly all of Joan wanted only one thing, and that was to go to California.

He suggested she meet him promptly at noon at the office, then come home with him to help him pack.

Should she dare it? It would be such fun. *Should* she? —

From noon till 3:20 meant three hours and twenty minutes, which was to say 200 minutes, in other words, 12,000 seconds. Cool and direct as she was, she knew she would wait till the 199th minute, the 11,999th second. Pamela had the car; there was no taxi in sight and she took the L from Granville station and cursed a slow Evanston express. From 12 till 3:20—she did want to go along. Of course she couldn't.

They found a taxi next to the LaSalle and scuttled through the traffic across the Loop.

"I'm quite excited," Philip said. "It's a fine assignment, and think, I've never been West, never seen the desert or the Pacific. I shall be pretty busy, but perhaps on the way back I can squeeze in a day at Santa Fé and see the Canyon. I've got to see all these oil people and look over their reserves—quite a big story. I've got the first paragraph in my head already. Lord! can't this driver move? How long away? Oh, not long. Back in three weeks."

They reached his flat and Phil paid the driver. Ri-

diculous! \$1.35 for twelve blocks in a taxi. They bounced upstairs.

It was going to be hard, breaking into this crisp, excited mood—train fever.

Three weeks was twenty-one days or twenty-one times twenty-four hours or twenty-one times twenty-four times sixty minutes or twenty-one times twenty-four times sixty-times sixty seconds. But no—stay cool!

Philip got out two bags and dove into cupboards and shelves for handkerchiefs and shirts.

"There's no hurry," he explained. "It's only one o'clock now. I don't know why I'm rushing you so." He turned an extra suit onto the bed. "O Lord! I can't fold clothes." He tussled with it. "But I do want every minute of you. Every *minute!* Two hours, old Joan." His back was turned, but he partly wheeled around and laughed. "Hello! here's your father's shirt!"

"I'll make lunch," Joan said.

"Please," he agreed. "All I've got to do is pack. I have the tickets. But, no, I must telephone two or three people, and I *ought* to drop in at the office for a moment on the way downtown. Oh, the devil! Where *are* my black socks?"

She made a salad and put bacon on the stove; in the other room he was telephoning.

London bridge is falling down, falling down, falling down, for some absurd reason kept running through her head.

No, it wasn't going to be hard at all. Hello! his voice calling. He was helping with the toast. Meanwhile she went into the outer room to set the table. There was suddenly a silence.

"Joan, you couldn't possibly come?"

How queer! He said that through the wall—from the other room. His voice was low.

"I want to. But I don't see how."

"It would be extremely, excruciatingly, epoch-makingly, and egregiously unconventional."

Philip alone was crushing his forehead with his hand. Shouldn't be saying this!

"That's not what's troubling me. It's just the difficulty of managing things."

"Sure. I know."

Then he was in the room with her.

"Look here, darling, *would* you come?"

He couldn't bear to leave her. In a way he felt he was running away from her. But she *must* come.

Joan didn't falter. "No, I don't think so," she said. She passed a hand over her brow. "I want to."

"All right, old Joan." He seemed to droop. "I'll be back, maybe in three weeks. You'll write, won't you? So will I. What a rotten letter-writer you are. Me too. The bacon smells great. Ready yet? Well, I'll just hustle away. Of course my damned laundry isn't here."

He was going—he was going. But nonsense. It was only an interval, a breathing space; he was hers, always. She could tell. Well, then—why not dare it?

"You're no great weight, but maybe if you sit on this bag too, we could close it."

She sat.

Sitting on the bag, she looked up at him.

Now—say it—just *say* it. Where was her courage?

"Oh, tea's boiling!" she exclaimed, rushing from the room.

Why didn't she just go with him, despite all the silly things that interfered ——?

"Now where in thunder is my new typewriter?"

"By the way," Joan called, "what about T. R.? Can I work on him while you're gone?"

"Sure. I have another long batch ready. Thanks, Joan."

"This trip is going to interrupt the end."

"Yes. Still, the book's almost done—and I've never been anywhere without finding out something new about the beggar. There ought to be lots of Roosevelt stuff out west."

"Of course—ranch things."

"No, I've finished that part. Now, if God is good, if God is very good, perhaps, *perhaps* I'll find some shaving cream." He was packing his last bag, a battered briefcase. "The center of this oil story is of course in Washington. There's the focus. The lid should be blown off. But out west I ought to find something—amusing local color—a side show—perhaps some dynamite. The big man will be hard to see. Great character, I hear. Oh—forgot to tell you. Ran into Hugh Macmillan yesterday."

He was dancing a little, back and forth between the two rooms.

How love made her heart glad and then squeezed it to make it hurt. She must listen. He was going——

They sat down to lunch.

"Philip——" Joan felt color mount her forehead.

"Toast. Some more toast."

"Here."

London Bridge was falling down, falling down, FALL-
ing down.

"Philip—before you go—I want to ask you something. Let's be brave."

"Aren't we brave?"

"No."

"I love you."

She nodded.

"You love me."

"Yes."

"Here—butter."

Joan dropped her toast.

"Phil ——"

It was really laughable. So hard to say! Heavens! What did men feel like?

He saw her face distressed and leaped up to lean over the back of her chair to comfort her.

"No. Go 'way."

"Joan?"

"Phil—you said—it would be unconventional—for me to come with you."

"It sure would." He laughed. "And I'm afraid—really—not possible. I didn't ask quite seriously."

"Philip darling—listen. Couldn't we do it conventionally?" She flushed but did not stammer. "Oh, that's a little rhetorical. I know there isn't time. But ——"

"Joan, when I come back, we'll talk then."

"No."

"All right. I'm quite game."

A curious look of aware attention was in his eyes.

"Philip"—she was smiling just a little—"will you marry me?"

"Oh," deep pain in his face. "Joan!"

First he looked utterly astounded, then confused as if realizing his astonishment was after all unjustified. He leaned close over the table and took one of her hands. He murmured to her and she almost cried, but then he said, and he didn't falter, "I don't think so. I'm afraid not. No!"

III

They were in a taxi on the way to the station. His bags were in front, piled next to the driver; the driver's back was flat against the glass behind which they sat. Joan felt hurt and sick. A dark heavy cloud of humiliation overwhelmed her, lit by keen lightnings of continuing disappointment. She hardly listened to him. Earnestly, doggedly, he was explaining.

"It's this way, Joan. You must know how I feel about marriage. I don't want to marry. Really, I feel that I *can't* marry. That's a very difficult thing to explain, I know; it's one of the things which, knowing a person, you simply have to accept in him. But imagine. Suppose I had asked you seriously to run away and just live with me. You'd have refused, wouldn't you? And found it difficult to explain why? Well, that's an exactly identical thing. Really, you must try to feel what I *feel*. I want you—God knows. But after all I'm an individuality. I can't afford simply to be sucked into *you* for the rest of my life. I can't give you—my life."

How queer she felt—all hurt inside and black, and yet she didn't believe what he said *could* be true.

"Now look here, Joan. This isn't easy for me. I love you. Oh yes! I didn't know I was going to love you at the beginning. I wanted to be friends. I haven't been trying to—to entrap you. I've been as much frightened as you—at the way we've fallen deeper into this thing. You remember how I talked—tried to explain—last night. This is what I wanted to say. And now—My God!"

"Well"—it was hard for Joan to speak—"what on earth have you been *after*?"

The taxi bumped to a halt. Red caps spilled toward

the taxi. He helped her out. No—he mustn't touch her. "Los Angeles limited," Philip said. "Yessir—yes-sir. This way. Follow me. Track nineteen."

IV

"Look here, I understand *your* point of view. I'm damned *sorry*——"

No—no one must be sorry for her; she mustn't be pitied——

He showed the tickets at the barrier. The white-haired gateman doffed his cap and clipped the tickets with a big shiny punch. It crunched when it bit the tickets. The Pullman conductor came up and took them along.

"I have principles," said Philip, helplessly.

"Too damned many," said Joan.

Smoke far ahead. The locomotive was wheezing.

"It seems to spoil everything—just when everything was perfect."

"Yes."

"There's five minutes," Philip urged. "Come on into the train."

They climbed the little footstool which the beaming black porter gave them.

"I suppose I am sorry——" she began, but broke off.

"When I'm back," Philip said, earnestly, "then we'll talk."

"I couldn't help it," she said.

"When I'm back we'll both of us be better—we do need a rest from each other. I want to get away for a little, Joan. Don't you? I want to look at you from some sort of distance. Think—for over two months now we've seen each other, haven't we?—almost every single day. It's too much."

"I didn't think it was. But yes—s'pose I did."

"Why, we'll be all right, Joan," he reassured her. "I know that. We *must* be all right. Let's wait a month and see. If I've been wrong, I'll be the first to say so. I won't be stubborn. But I don't think I *can* marry. I've got to be fair and *say* that. It's what I've been trying to say all along." He paused. "Of course, I should have said it sooner. But I couldn't help it. Well—I am saying it now!"

"I don't understand," Joan said.

A long whistle soared upward from the train.

"Better go," he ordered.

She dropped a magazine she had bought for him. It splashed open on the green seat. Together they slid through the narrow part of the corridor and he stepped with her to the pavement.

"But it's so unbelievable," she tried to say. "We love each other. After all—from the first moment—you *pursued* me!"

"I wish there was time to talk more."

"I don't want to *talk*!"

"All aboard," the conductor cried. A last passenger was running along the platform.

"Good-by," he had to say.

London Bridge was — He had beaten her—he was going—and when he came back —

He reached down and kissed her. She felt her arms tighten. The train moved.

"Look out, lady," a porter called.

The train gathered speed and Philip stepped up. She saw his face acutely furrowed. He was leaning from the door, not moving. She turned away, walking down the long trainshed, and felt — No, she wouldn't cry. She walked the length of Madison Street into the Loop. Pas-

sers-by brushed her arms. She slipped among street cars. At the Boulevard she boarded a bus mechanically and sat outside on the top.

So he wouldn't marry her. Well. That made quite a problem, didn't it?

v

Ralph dropped in one evening. He was in dinner clothes and looked polished and attractive. His face shone and there was a compelling surface attraction glancing in his eyes and on his cheeks. Ralph had a habit of being able to switch his personality on, to meet occasions. Joan used to say it came usually after he had beaten her in five sets of tennis. "What doing?" Pamela asked. She was munching a caramel and flipping through *The Saturday Evening Post*. Sometimes, rarely, Pamela had lag periods; and then her boredom was as of the devil.

"Oh, nothing. Just thought I'd drop in."

Pamela was growing up, although she still went to the theater or watched basket-ball games or drove off in Joan's car so incessantly that the family barely saw enough of her to know. She was still extremely positive, crisp, magnetic, and entirely unapproachable. Once this year she lost her temper when Mrs. Pomeroy rebuked her for having been out two nights running until after four; whereupon she ran away for two days. Pamela liked Ralph very much. She had no illusions about him, however. "People always have to be introduced to him twice," she said, unapologetically.

She and Joan were good friends. Pamela had had one period a year or two before of intense jealousy of Joan; and occasionally Joan was irritated at the way she wasted time and some surface share of herself on this trooping,

unending, wide-eyed procession of young men. But during all of this year they were intimate. Joan didn't talk about Philip to Pamela, and Pamela said nothing except to burst out occasionally in high, ribald raillery; but Joan knew what a perfect sympathy Pamela felt. And the young sister said, grimly: "Sure, I approve of Philip, because for some reason—Gee! its funny—I'm not falling for him myself." For a long time she had seemed predestined to interest only in men who were interested in Joan. Even in the pink shirts of Willard, Pamela had found a certain perverse fascination.

Pamela dropped the magazine and picked up the evening paper. Ralph put down his coat and read it, too, over her shoulder.

"Follies coming," he noted.

She felt suddenly in a strange manner how *near* he was.

"Do you know," Pamela said, "I've never seen the Follies. It's curious—just occurred to me."

Ralph stared at her in sophisticated surprise. How lovely the kid was—her hair a wild tangle this way!

He felt resolution mount and stun him.

"Listen," he said. He turned to her. "When the Follies come—listen—let's go!"

Pamela was surprised, too. She felt a little uneasy. "Sure," she said; "love to." Ralph was still staring at her. She was off in a bound and ran upstairs.

VI

Mr. Tilford returned that week from a fortnight in Boston with his horizon greatly enlarged. Joan saw straight off that he was happy—he seemed less tired and he said that the little vacation, seeing friends, hearing

music, had done him good. His telegram that he was returning had shocked her. She had hardly realized he was gone.

Mr. Tilford thought that she looked thin. He asked about Philip friendlily.

"Oh," Joan said, "he's away—a few weeks in California."

"I see," Mr. Tilford said.

They reached home, and the pleasantest thing about the Century, he said, was certainly the fact one arrived in Chicago just in time for breakfast. Sarah and Bessie were ready for him, and Joan had breakfast over again. Even Pamela came down. Her father looked extraordinarily well—no doubt of it—looked so *young*! He didn't mention Philip again. Nor did Joan.

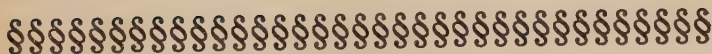
Then she hardly saw him for a week, because, indeed, gliding in and out of the house quietly, he seemed actually to be avoiding her; perhaps this was because he feared he might intrude—if she were unhappy—on some secret mood. Most of the time he was alone in the library, clearing up with accumulated energy a vast mass of private papers; she peeked in once or twice, and saw him sitting at work; once, passing the door, she heard him chuckling, alone, aloud. Her father! Next to Philip—it *was* rather extraordinary that her father had taken second place. Well, that just meant that in a different way she loved him more. As to Philip—oh, don't think about it. It was bound to be all right. She wouldn't *let* herself think about him.

Mr. Tilford did not explain to Joan the reasons for his quiet jubilation, nor did she guess.

What happened was that at last in Boston he and Hilda Jacobsen had become lovers.



Chapter Six



I

SHIRLEY NORTHWAY telephoned one afternoon and Joan was delighted to hear from her.

"Come on to a party," Shirley said.

"I'd love to," Joan answered her. "Where—at your house?"

"No," Shirley said, "rather not; but meet me here. Then we'll go."

Joan arrived. Shirley's apartment on Bryn Mawr was much as she remembered it. She had seen it once a long time before at an evening of Richard's. Shirley showed her a new bust, again a self-portrait. "I shall do a portrait of myself once a year," Shirley said. "Watch the years attack me. Comparative study of the fierce Inroads of Age." Shirley looked about seventeen and Joan had to laugh; still, there were fine lines visible outward from her eyes. She was wearing a soft clinging dress of shiny green-blue; her shoulders were cream-colored and round like her round throat; her hair soft and cloudy in the candle-light. "You're so beautiful!" Joan couldn't help but say. "It's a great nuisance," Shirley agreed.

They were together a moment before the mirror in the hall. Shirley stopped and looked, saying, "You're not so bad yourself—in fact——!" Both so dark, they looked

rather alike, except that Joan's face was framed squarely by her hair; Shirley's was an oval, smoother, softer. Their mouths were each small circles of red light in the mirror. They seemed close in the mirror, and in the candle-light the images swam together a little. "I've often wished I were a man—I do now," Shirley laughed. Joan was wearing a dark orange-colored dress; in the dim light her eyes looked purple, and her shoulders gleamed.

"Where are we going?" Joan asked. "To a very mysterious house," Shirley said; "it's small and dark outside and very warm and brilliant inside, and there are always amusing people there." "Whose house?" "His name is Macmillan." Down the street they walked away from the Drive and took a Broadway car, changing at Montrose. The street car was noisy and crowded. Shirley waved generally around the inside of the car. "I'm rather poor." Workmen were staring at them.

The street-car line cut across the city westward—from the glaring lights of the shore boulevard into a darker region: first past the quiet breadth of Graceland cemetery, then through lights again when big cross-streets like Clark and Ashland cut through; then through a smooth, dreary region full of humble flats, of delicatessen stores, of clusters of frame houses under arc lights, and knots of little one-room restaurants. The car clambered over the river. Beyond the river was new ground, a subdivision lately reticulated into neat modern houses, laid out like a diagram between the north branch and the last thrust of elevated tracks.

"Off here," said Shirley.

They stepped from the car. Two laborers wearing red bandana handkerchiefs kept staring at them. They walked briskly from Sacramento on to Wilson.

"I can never tell which house," Shirley said. "How Hugh can find his way home when he's tight is beyond me."

"Does he get tight often?"

"Very seldom—only when it pays."

"What do you mean?"

Shirley was looking for the house numbers. The street was quiet, with the night sky close; the globular lamps stretched overhead like measured pearls. "Here—this is it."

They walked through the little garden to the dark door. Shirley rang.

The door opened and a man laughing abstractedly called them in.

"Hello, Shirley! Who's your friend? Let's have a look at her. Come in—come right in! This will be a party."

II

Then Joan saw the most amazing house she had ever seen.

The front room was two stories high, with a balcony running around three sides. The gables of the roof were visible and were stained deep brown. From them hung a series of European travel agency and railroad posters, including a bright blue-and-white lithograph of Stockholm and a jolly one in black and silver called "Etoile du Nord." The walls were hung mostly with photographs—one of a boy, perhaps three years old, reading with a huge, preposterous pair of glasses a book in Greek; one of a girl, nude, seen behind a sunny blur of trees; two or three Chicago river pictures; a good many architectural scenes. Dr. Macmillan was evidently a photographer. On the

mantelpieces were a series of cases of Greek columns. Over the grand piano in one corner hung a gray Paisley shawl.

This room opened directly into another of similar size. On the long wall was a throne, built into the wall. First was a cushion seat, then a Chinese drawing for the background; the whole was cunningly illumined with a diadem of colored lights. On the opposite walls were books. The book backs were colored red, orange, purple, sky-blue, cinnamon, gold, amber. In a corner was a map. It was on parchment and depicted an imaginary world. Only places were indicated which did not exist. The island of South Wind was there, the kingdom of Alsandar, the home of Circe, the harbor of Colchis. Across what was vaguely Asia Marco Polo's trail stretched like a jade snake. Then Joan remembered—Dr. Macmillan was the man who had spoken at her convocation. Well! Evidently he was a cartographer. In another corner of the room was an extremely modern and efficient radio set.

Transversely a third room opened forth. It was the black room. The walls were stained black, and also the ceiling; the woodwork was painted gold. But most of the wall space was taken up with a series of panels eccentrically portraying various aspects of the private life of a colored maiden presumably in Fiji. Apparently Dr. Macmillan was a painter. An easel stood in a corner, and on the bookcase was an amusing holder for paint brushes made colorful by stiff daubs of paint. Also in the room was a curious marble ornament which Joan inspected cautiously. Opening from this room was a bath and bedrooms. "The family album," commented Shirley, pointing to the Fiji maidens.

The kitchen came next. But it was necessary to explain that it was a kitchen. Stove on one side, sink on the

other, were severally concealed by immense cupboard-like panels, gaily decorated, lacquered to silky brilliance. The ceiling of the kitchen was bright blue, spangled with silver stars. On the sideboard was the most ambitious bar Joan had ever seen, and a pile of cook-books a foot high. Dr. Macmillan was evidently a connoisseur in food and drink. Also in the kitchen was an overflow of architectural ornaments. Of course that was his job. He was an architect.

"But you haven't seen half," Shirley said.

Behind the kitchen came the study; it was a somber room done in violet and amber, somber but very clear. A cowl and surplice was in one corner. In another was a pile of great green filing cases, like a fortification. Evidently Dr. Macmillan was a student. There were pictures on the walls and many bookcases. On a desk was a casual array of such bibliographical trifles as a first-edition Boswell, a second Folio, and more modern English first editions than she had ever seen before. Evidently Dr. Macmillan was something of a bibliophile. There was a divan in the room and she was surprised to see two people lying on it. They paid no attention to her, however, and she quietly left the room.

Downstairs she continued. The basement was cleared of impedimenta and around the furnace were still other paneled, highly colored screens. An intricate web of concealed lights shaded the walls. The center of the room was a dancing space. Dr. Macmillan was dancing vaguely with a pretty girl. There was another room in the basement, filled with a big work bench and all manner of tools—saws tempered like swords; hammers stern and shining; magnificent screw-drivers; cruel, stone-cold chisels; planes and T-squares; a great brace-and-bit; and a beautiful little series of pliers. Half completed on the

bench was a puppet theater. Evidently Dr. Macmillan was a carpenter. There was an overflow of books in this room too, and some insignificant prints, a couple of Rembrandts, hidden darkly on the walls.

Upstairs again, Shirley laughing at her side, Joan tried to seize the whole.

"This is the maddest house I've ever seen—or perhaps the sanest," she felt like saying. She saw Macmillan prod absently through the house. Evidently too he took little interest in all these things.

III

People were streaming in. Some of them she knew. There was Corcoran—he had been a classmate; there were two girls she remembered from the north shore. In the great room was a guest book and she saw a lot of signatures; she saw Justine had been here; in fact almost everyone in Chicago had been here. A Frenchman came up and introduced himself as the Comte du Tire-Bouchon. Oh yes, his real name, Shirley said. Tire-Bouchon watched girls' ankles and kept twittering to himself mysteriously. People streamed in—then out again into the garden—then again in. Joan heard some one call, "Martin."

"Does he paint the garden? What color are the trees?"

"Oh, don't mind. It's just casual," Shirley explained. "In a year it'll all be done over—perhaps in funereal gray."

"Imagine living here."

"I often have—imagined it."

She and Shirley sat in the black-gold room. They could just see people entering, shadows trooping through the rooms.

"Where *is* Richard, Shirley?"

"Oh, Richard."

Joan heard Macmillan say: "No, not guilty. Never met her. Anyway, her voice is too high."

"I've been so curious," Joan said.

"Well, an exciting thing has happened. You'd never guess. Richard has turned into a *painter*. A painter. He's in Spain somewhere—according to the last letter I had—sitting with a sketch book and a box of colors—*painting*."

"Isn't he coming back?"

"Of course—some day. I hope so. I want him back."

"It was such a strange thing. What did he do—at first?"

A cork popped like a pistol-shot in the next room. There was dancing downstairs. The music came up through the floor, beating.

"This isn't really the kind of party Macmillan likes," Shirley explained. "He must be very sad about something. What he likes is a group of young people sitting and maybe having a little drink and reading or talking."

"What does he do? Oh, of course."

Shirley ticked off half a dozen Chicago buildings, some of them well-known.

"But about Richard," Joan prodded her.

"Well—he had a breakdown; not a bad one, luckily. But it *was* my fault." She turned to Joan and Joan saw cool, decisive ardor in her face. "Just the same, we have to live our own lives, don't we?"

Macmillan came over to fetch Shirley.

"I like to dance with sculptors," he laughed. "Especially when their husbands are away."

Joan wandered into the front room again. Corcoran dove for her. Some one offered her a drink. She felt

intimate with the party. She knew she would have a good time. A tall, older man with dark eyes was watching her and he looked interesting. Something might happen tonight. The count of Tire-Bouchon came up, twittering.

Joan sauntered, looking at the books idly, into the furthest room.

"Hello!" she said.

There was Phil.

IV

"Hello!"

"Hello!"

He rose a little awkwardly and then sat down again.

"When did you get in?"

"Two hours ago."

Joan just stared.

"Really, didn't you get my wire? I wired from Council Bluffs. You'll find it home waiting for you."

"Philip, why didn't you wire earlier? I did want to meet you."

He shrugged. "Impulse. Inhibition. Fear." He mocked a little and listed a long similar catalogue of single words.

She was silent.

"If you don't believe me, there's my bag out there."

"I'm not disbelieving you."

"You are like two triangles," he said. "An equilateral triangle pointing downward—the head—to intersect a very long isosceles triangle."

"Philip!"

"What a cautionary tone!"

She had begun to laugh, but bit her lip.

"Have a good trip? I liked your stories immensely—I do want to hear about it."

"It was quite fine. I ate too much Harvey food. I swam in the Pacific. I visited Hollywood. I got a good story in Los Angeles. I missed you like hell. I stole a day and saw the Canyon. I had two nights in camp in New Mexico and caught this cold. I spent a good deal of money. I have some long mail stories still to write. I returned. That's about all."

"I'm here with Shirley," explained Joan, glancing around.

"It's quite extraordinary, meeting you this way."

"Phil—I did miss you, too. I'm sorry I didn't write more. Did you get the long telegram to Cheyenne?"

"You are like three triangles," he said. "I forgot one." She didn't know whether to laugh or cry.

"Listen to that music. Do you like Macmillan?"

"I don't know—haven't talked to him yet."

"Fine architectural flower, isn't he?"

"He seems to think he's quite a lady-killer."

"I like him," Philip said. "You will, too, I think. He has quality. That's rare nowadays. He is cunning and perverse. What I like about him is that he knows enough to be interested in everything."

"Philip—— Oh, I won't say it."

"What were you going to say?"

"Nothing."

He shrugged.

"I finished the T. R. typing."

"Good. Thanks."

He was lower in the chair and somehow *set*. Joan watched anxiously his pale face. The forehead shadows were rigid.

"I did miss you. I'm sorry if I telegraphed only at

the last moment. I missed you like a fever. You were like rain in my mind, always pouring. You were a steady downpouring curtain of rain obscuring everything else." He laughed cautiously, his first laugh. "I'm not sure I like it."

"Oh—Phil darling—I missed you too—so much."

"I must get up," he said.

"Get up?"

"I don't feel like getting up."

"There are some nice books here."

"I'm sick and tired of reading other people's books."

"What do you want?" She saw him reaching.

"Fuel," he laughed.

"Tell me about the trip out—and in Los Angeles did you see any movie people?"

"I'm sick and tired of reading other people's books."

"Hello! There's Shirley."

She waved.

"Shirley is like six or seven triangles," Philip said.

Joan wanted to get him out of that chair.

"My own dear damned triangular darling," he was muttering. "My own dear damned triangular darling!"

"Hush!" Joan cautioned him.

"I'm sick and tired of reading other people's books."

He got up and drifted into the kitchen.

"Hello!" Macmillan laughed.

"More fuel," said Philip.

Then it dawned on her.

He was drunk.

v

Hugh Macmillan was about sixty. His voice had a chuckle running in it. Yet he seemed always to be say-

ing: "You'd better listen carefully—take me seriously. I can laugh—but it's dangerous for you." He had fine hands: broad, sinewy, with a hard, rather powdery, many times finely indented surface; the fingers hardly tapered till the very tips; the wrists were supple but no bone showed. He had gray hair and eyes. "I have the best legs in Chicago," he laughed once.

On the other hand, his vitality and laughter were a mask. He was dancing like a centaur now, but mostly he wandered through the rooms quite vaguely, as if in curiosity who these people in his house were, and why he had invited them. Many people came, of course, without invitation; and Macmillan, when he paid any attention at all to his party, stopped them occasionally and asked their names. He was not, however, in the least curious in detail. From all the things he could do, Joan found, from all his interests and hobbies and collections, he was in fact remote. "What are they for?" he seemed to shrug, laughing. Of course he knew everything in the world. Some woman, it was said, always dropped a handkerchief when he was around. Occasionally he picked it up.

Philip was in a corner, looking at some designs for screen panels which Macmillan was showing him; Philip seemed the more interested. The girl called Martin came up, in a proprietary sort of way edging between the two men; she slipped an arm to each. Philip smiled at her. Then Joan remembered, this was the girl he had mentioned once, and, feeling a little tingle, she watched more closely. Wonder whether Martin was her first or her last name? Later several times Joan saw her whispering to Philip, just cocking her head to him confidentially, smiling; and once she saw her touch his forearm with her open curved hand. Philip seemed bored, but was polite as always. He did not *seem* drunk. Martin was an un-

usual-looking girl, very small and trim; she had breasts of the fashionable new model, high and small and apart, and lips which looked as if they had just been skinned. There was no cleft at all in the upper lip. Joan was uneasy when she led Philip into the dark basement where they were dancing.

Macmillan came up to Joan. She said:

"I heard you make a good speech once—at school—at my graduation."

"Of course—last June—just a year ago. I've forgotten, though, what it was about."

"I haven't. It was about ecstasy." Joan laughed. "Good academic subject."

Tire-Bouchon kept coming after her, flirting in French. That tall, older man, he with the very deep brown eyes, was watching her still. People were following her around tonight.

"You're not very much interested in your party, are you?" Joan asked.

"Oh, I like to see youth playing."

"You must be pretty old, then, I suppose," she ventured.

He looked at her with interest. "What a direct person you are"—mocking. "You like my house?"

"It's a nightmare," Joan said. "By the way, do you always appreciate directness?"

"I pretend to sometimes. Why? Want to ask something?"

"Yes. Who's that girl Martin?"

"The usual mixture. Half beauty, half rot."

"Which is the half that attracts you?" Joan laughed.

He looked at her more sharply. "I remember Shirley having talked about you now. If you ever want a job or anything, let me know." He shrugged suddenly. "Not

that I believe you could do anything. But you're rather obviously smart."

"Thanks—really," Joan said.

"What is a kiss," said Macmillan, looking at Martin, "but the mutual and contiguous approximation of the mucous membranes of the mouth."

"It's more than that," Joan said.

"Look," pointed Macmillan, "at that young man looking at you."

"Who? Oh—Philip."

"Interesting," said Macmillan. "He must be an attachment."

"I'm not really sure whether he's an attachment or not."

"If I ever saw a man look sick with love, there he is." Macmillan did not laugh. "But good. Good for you."

Joan looked up, startled.

"Perhaps I ought to tell Philip to watch out."

"He can take care of himself—I rather think," she had to murmur.

"Doubtless. You don't look a dangerous person."

Corcoran came up with Shirley and they began to ask Macmillan what new books on sculpture he might have. "I don't read books any more." Joan saw that golden girl, Doris Barron, alone in a corner. She looked disappointed. All these people just *talking*. Joan wanted Macmillan to show her his big map, but he shook his head. "No. What for?" She saw Philip go downstairs again.

"Come around sometime again," Macmillan called after her.

"All right."

"I'd like to photograph you. Wear a floppy hat."

But already he was listening to some one else, his head half bent as if he hoped he'd hear something worth remembering—and doubting it.

VI

The tall silent man came up.

"I beg your pardon profoundly," he said. "I have never seen you before, but I am in love with you. My name is Jackson and I am married but do not live with my wife. I have two boys away in school. I am a business man, but Macmillan and I are both members of the camera club and sometimes I come here. But I am a respectable character and have a bank account. I am passionately in love with you. Will you come to bed with me—now?"

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Joan.

"Ah ——"

"No! No!" she said.

"Please!"

"No," she said, decisively. "I'm afraid not."

"Oh."

"But, Gee!" she called. "Thanks."

VII

Martin was precariously walking among the rooms, balancing trays of red cocktails. They were deep red cocktails and in the slim glasses they looked like molten rubies floating. Shirley, Joan, Corcoran, Tire-Bouchon, stood in the big front room, flirting, chattering. They were standing and walking on music. The music beat up through the floor.

"Any more? Any more?" Martin called, carrying the cocktails. "Last call!"

It was impossible to keep track of the party room by room. Everyone was shifting too quickly. Some ran downstairs to dance and were up in a moment, and others dove into the garden. A few were restlessly prodding among the books, and a young man named Parker was playing tricks with the melody of lights over the Chinese throne. "The erogenous zones are thirty-seven in number," Austin Devery said, precisely. "The webbing of the fingers, the lobes of the ear, the——" Doris listened.

Joan, with Philip close behind her, paraded. The music was dancing songs under her feet. She wanted to dance and she said to him, "Come along." He was eager to dance and they both laughed, clutching each other down the narrow stairs. Bam! The music collided with itself—bam—bam! It stopped. On the dance floor a young man was saying, "I assure you I have eleven Korean servants. I have cornered all the Korean servants in the middle west." He danced by himself. "One of them has nothing to do but sweep the leaves off my outdoor swimming pool."

Macmillan was on the way upstairs. "I am going to take a walk," he said over his shoulder.

"I am writing a novel exclusively about things," said a lady with pince-nez and dark hair brushed over her forehead. "Yes—exclusively about things. . . . Thank you, no, I don't drink. It is so bad for the stomach. My book has no characters in it at all. Just things. The things think. There are a tulip-box and two lovely chairs, and a wonderful, wonderful grand piano. The piano is the hero. . . . No, no people. Why, don't you under-

stand? The book is *about* the things—what they do—how they feel—their *souls!*”

Joan finished a dance with Phil and then watched the others. All of them were dancing with cigarettes or glasses in their hands, and it seemed strange, watching them, their faces were so set and sad; only their buttocks were really gay. Bam—bam!

Joan found herself near Martin. Smiling from her queer, seductive lips Martin said to Corcoran—Joan heard her slight throaty voice: “What am I doing now? I don’t just know.” Corcoran asked what was wrong. “Been fired from my last three jobs,” Martin confessed. “Why?” “For seducing,” she laughed, “my employers.” Some one came up and Joan listened to him talk about furniture—he himself was a genuine Chippendale, he said.

Macmillan was downstairs again. “I like Pan books—yes,” she heard him say. “I have quite a Pan shelf. I’ll show you.” He dropped the girl. “That’s enough for *you!*” He whirled Shirley around the room twice and came over to Joan, who was glad to dance with him. The music rebounded now from the low ceiling. What was he saying—yes—interesting. “Of course I’ll come again.”

The gentleman with the Korean servants collapsed on the floor. Philip was dancing with Shirley. A crowd led by Freddie Bishop entered. Freddie was an exquisite little fellow with a pert voice and a small neat mustache perched on his upper lip. Philip pointed to some one in answer to Joan’s question. “Yes,” he said, “a terrible person. I know him—cultivated and all that—speaks seven languages including the homosexual.” Bam!

They were upstairs again. They were in the kitchen, frying ham and eggs. It was late—after three. Several boys were huddled across one another on the floor of the

cloakroom; they looked white and dead. Billows of cigarette smoke drifted from one room to the next. Philip was silent and Joan felt suddenly very tired. They noticed young Parker standing alone and intense in a corner.

"Who the hell said I was drunk?" Parker suddenly screamed. "I'm not drunk! Anyone is a God damn liar who says I'm drunk! Who said I was drunk?"

They turned with interest to an old man walking from one of the rooms, bearded, nude, holding aloft a cane on which was tied a green handkerchief. Some one said he was Spanish.

Macmillan and Martin were at the bar.

"Here!" Macmillan kept saying. "Lap!"

VIII

By some miracle Joan and Philip found themselves alone in one of the rooms. He looked at her; all of his face in a strange manner erupted, changed, then became perfectly composed; he smiled and pushed the door closed. Joan was steady. She watched him. It was very late. She was dead tired.

"My dear!" Philip was advancing to her. "I love you! I love you to distraction. You're all my life."

"My dear ——"

"Sorry I was tight. I'm sober now."

"Of course—I know. I'm terribly tired."

"I'm so glad I'm back."

"I'm so glad you're back."

He was kissing her. She felt absorbed into his kiss. She was too tired physically, she thought, even to respond; he was just taking her.

He pulled himself away.

"Time to go home, I dare say," he muttered.

"Yes. I'm so tired."

"Joan, come with me tonight."

"Oh, I can't."

"Here are those darned suitcases of mine." He pointed.

"Let's go somewhere."

Really she couldn't.

"Philip—I want to—but not tonight."

"It's got to be soon. Joan—my God!"

"Why, Philip—yes—I suppose so—but ——"

"Joan ——!"

"I'll say yes—sometime—but not now—please."

It was a funny thing, when you were as tired as all this, all you wanted to do was just keel over and go to sleep, and stay asleep, and think about everything the next morning.

"I don't understand this," he said, with a sort of helpless belligerence.

"I don't, either."

"Damn it, I don't understand it."

"Oh—not now. Please don't quarrel."

"I will quarrel!"

"So might I," Joan replied, brushing up. "I was dreadfully hurt—finding you here."

"Why should you be hurt? Can't I go where I like?"

He looked truculent and she quaked.

"Damn it!" Philip cried. "I'm getting sick and tired of never being able to get away from you!"

"Get away from me?"

"Yes."

"You haven't seen me for four weeks."

"Haven't I, though? God! Every night when I fall asleep—every morning when I wake up—all day when I think—all night when I dream. Interminably—incessantly. Haven't I seen you? My God!"

"It's the same with me," Joan whispered.

"I'm growing to hate you," Philip said. "I hate you now. That's really why I went away. Because you've made me vary from that complete intellectual honesty which is—excuse my being a prig—so—so essential. *So* essential. You've made me lie."

"You mean—you've said you love me—and don't?"

"Oh no!" He jumped. "Oh no!" He laughed bitterly. "Love you? —Lord—I'm *consumed* with you! No, it's something else." His voice changed. "I can't tell you. Don't ask. Unless I'm *very* drunk some night. *Very* drunk." He paused. "Not that it's important. Remember that, too. It's not important."

She didn't know what to say. Better quiet him. Make him sit down and not weave this way.

"Joan, come away with me."

"I'll say yes some day."

"Why not now? Damn it, what is the matter?"

"Not tonight. I'm so tired."

"Don't you love me?"

"Philip—please."

"No, I won't let you go."

"Please."

"What's the matter with you? Can't you love me?"

Do you want a *price*?"

"Oh, Heavens! Phil."

He stood irresolute. He was taut a moment and then slackened.

"But, damn it! I am pretty angry."

"I'm sorry," Joan said.

"It seems so hopeless."

"It won't tomorrow."

"All right."

"It's after four," she said.

There was a sort of resolution in his face.

"I'll call up tomorrow."

"Please—yes ——" Joan said.

He hung a moment.

"Again, my darling, will you ——"

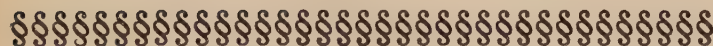
"No," Joan shook her head.

"Well, good night." He turned away. "I think I'll stay here."

"All right. Good night."

They were out in the big room now. Most of the party was still there, although Macmillan had gone to bed. Joan said a drifting good-by to everyone. She smiled at the girl Martin. Shirley took her arm and together they left the house, walking eastward down Wilson till they found a taxi.

At home, Joan slid the heavy door open. She stretched her eyes painfully. She went upstairs to bed.



I

But everything was wrong. Since the night he had returned from California they had had no inner peace. She looked back now almost wistfully to the first months when they had found each other, fallen in love, and drifted. No drifting now! Indeed not. Instead they were driving forward, upward, to climax. That climax was not easy to grasp. They had shifted in regard to one another, and were groping toward permanence each from an utterly different if not overtly expressed point of view.

"Not at all," Joan said. "I understand perfectly."

He seemed to be apologizing for more than had actually occurred. And indeed what remained with each of them long after the quarrel was forgotten was first a sediment of fundamental disagreement and then a yeast of unrest. Each of them had made a proposal, and each proposal had been rejected.

She wanted to marry. He didn't. He wanted to live with her. She didn't. That is, she *wanted* to—Heaven knew!—but she *couldn't*. If he would concede nothing to her, if he wouldn't sacrifice a little of his egoism, then obviously it was impossible for her to concede on her side, especially since the concession would be herself. It was too unreasonable a thing to ask, it was too summary and urgent a breaking of her spirit—or would be. Of course, Philip refrained carefully from reiterating his proposal. He saw very well how delicately they were poised on this dilemma. He didn't want any crash—any more than she.

Of course she didn't object to his proposal—not in the least. Heavens! hadn't she all but proposed the same thing? Several times? Such affairs were matters of moments, and depended on the way each moment came out. She felt constant, positive, burning hunger for him. He was a hammer beating in her head. But, as for running away with him in cold blood, which was what he wanted now, that was quite another thing.

It was too bad she had made her own silly, inopportune proposal. But—she shrugged—she had made it and doubtless, in his mind, in her mind, it would persist. That she had asked him to marry her! However, she persuaded herself, after all none of this turmoil mattered so *very* much; in the end they were bound to be all right: it was inevitable that they should be right. In her mind a positive idea of inevitability had not yet been broken.

The stars hung like crosses in the sky; early in the morning the chickadees twittered on her porch—these were verities in life. These were things which could not be shaken—nor could their love—ever.

To prolong this struggle meant hurting her just as much as it apparently was hurting him. How long could this tension continue? Wasn't he likely to break? The strain was in his face and hands, he was drawn and tense. But, oh! he too must know that this was just a passing phase. In the end they would have each other. Of course! On her terms. Joan's chin sank hard on her fist. Yes. On *her* terms. "Oh," she retreated, wondering if she were being fair, "I'm not doing these things fairly or unfairly. I can't help it what I'm doing."

Yet to some extent it *was* a matter of will. There was such a thing as love. Yes. But sometimes even love had to give way to something stronger. The something stronger was not merely pride. It was a factor including pride but beyond it, a feeling that if she submitted to him her reverence for herself as an individuality would disappear. Yes. How explain that? She lifted her shoulders. She couldn't explain.

It was an awfully hard thing, to refuse herself. But what could she do? Could she help it?

She *wouldn't* simply run off with him—she wouldn't simply be beaten in this—she was damned if she would.

"I *won't* be just his mistress!" Joan said to herself. Her chin came down on her fist again. She didn't hear when the telephone rang.

II

She came across a poem; in it was beautifully expressed that old idea, the Yes in the No.

She pondered on the poem; it was quite true how that sort of affirmative negation often took place.

She pondered longer. What seemed to fit her own case was something perversely opposite, the No in the Yes.

III

Philip's newspaper day was over at three o'clock; promptly then he came north to the Tilford house; or toward four she came down to meet him, whereupon they had tea. Reservedly, almost clumsily, they were trying to be friends. Almost surprisingly, they had three quite happy weeks together: perhaps not surprisingly, because her evasion of his proposal had both sobered and frightened him, so that very carefully, knowing how easily they might accidentally reach a formal break, he sought a retreat to uncontroversial terms. Sometimes he thought of her proposal. That was — Up went his palms squeezing his forehead.

It was still a miracle that there could be so much to talk about. Often they had both tea and dinner, and in the evening as well as the afternoon they fought eagerly interrupting themselves for words. They were becoming essential to each other in that each found expression and reciprocation of the innumerable tiny odds and ends of life which it was so amusing and soon so necessary to exchange; shortly there was no event too small to escape their conversation; their denominator of social intercourse was the lowest possible. How delightful to hear Joan mention the color of a stone she picked up that morning! How disastrous should Philip forget to tell her what he had for breakfast!

After dinner was best. Philip brought his manuscript

to the house, and to sit silent watching him work gave Joan as rare a pleasure as anything in these weeks. He turned over the pages, writing with a variety of colored pencils because he was correcting final sequential details; he grunted often and swore once or twice, using words she had not heard before. This was a private part of him she was having! There were a dozen reference books which he intermittently inspected; then often he circled the room restlessly, smoking; sometimes he sat for an hour and didn't move. During such hours she was quiet, too. She wanted to help, but he said at this stage he had to do everything alone. Once or twice however she read aloud to him his completed chapters.

Of course there were other things to do. Once they picked up Pamela and Mrs. Pomeroy and week-ended in the Dunes. That was a new Philip then—amusingly and entirely incompetently gathering wood, trying to make a fire. Joan sat on a hill at sundown so that her shadow lay like a silhouette on the sand, watching fire melt down from the sun into the water. Once they called up Shirley and once went to a dance at the Beach because he said he wanted so badly to see her in evening clothes. They saw some good movies, but did not remember them often. "The Gold Rush" stuck in their minds, however, and they remembered a splendid program picture, "Mantrap," with a jolly new actress in it. They had a Tomlinson passion together and read everything of his they could lay hands on. Philip's Chicago piece appeared and made a pleasant little sensation. They deserted an Arabesque house party after the first day. They found a restaurant they liked better even than the Tip-Top, a little place called the Cicero. Often they went to the Petit Gourmet for tea. And almost every night between eleven and twelve—be-

cause he was on duty early in the morning—they would smile at the door, and he would say good-night, and she would be grave and happy—and then there would be another day.

They did not talk of love. They did not give opportunity to love. That was part of the enchantment of these brief climbing weeks. With no word of agreement nor any idea of prearranged experiment, they slipped into this game wherein each forgot the more obvious beauties and lived a little hungry. Gradually they came to recognize the factors in this game, and to pay attention to its unstated rules, hoping against hope that it would not end. Neither could dare wilfully to break it off—to break it would plunge them, almost certainly, into abysmal, hopeless confusion. Yet this sense of possible defeat did not mar their happiness. They were not wary. All of this had just happened, perfectly. They kissed remotely, candidly, and wondered how long it would last.

IV

For three weeks, almost four weeks, the game lasted—an eternity—twenty-five days, twenty-six days—then it broke. Philip broke it.

He was sitting in the library, writing, late after dinner, and Joan was in one of the big chairs, skimming through a book. She felt he was looking at her, but she did not look up. Suddenly in the silence came a groan; he brushed the papers away with his forearms level to the table; a book falling bounced like a bomb.

Joan in a second was over him, bending with her chest over his head, her heart up in her throat.

"Philip—my darling!"

He did not move. She felt his head press upward and she slipped away and around, sitting on the arm of the chair, with an arm around his slumped shoulder, wondering, her heart weeping.

"It can't be done. I can't stand it." He paused, looking up. "It's impossible. We can't go on like this."

She must be strong, but could she resist him, loving him so?

"Joan, I've seen all along what was coming. So have you. Well—let's say it."

She nodded. She did not want to nod. She listened.

"Look here. I can't marry and I won't, but I love you. Let's elope—go to Europe. Will you come abroad and live with me?"

She steeled herself.

"No," Joan said. "I'd like to—but I can't."

He asked her again.

"No," Joan said. "Philip—I don't think so. No!"

v

She tried to explain. Explanations weren't really necessary. To him, too, it must be pretty clear. She couldn't run away with him because it was not *right* to do so. She was not thinking in terms of moral principles. She was willing to forget her home, her father, even her essential and inbred instinct for marriage. The question of right and wrong was exerted in another sense. She didn't feel she could accept Philip's proposal because it was too facile. She felt there could be no virtue in anything which existed only because it discarded everything else.

Besides, of course, there was the fact that she couldn't accept Philip's proposal after he had rejected hers. After

all, there was such a thing as self-respect. As pride. She could cancel her prejudices and her inhibitions—sure—but casting off from the whole of her life and joining him in an adventure the nature of which she was sure he did not himself fully realize—just because he was stubborn—that was too flagrant a submission. She did not object to its ethics, but she did object to its lack of common sense.

VI

"We'll go to Italy," Philip said.

"Ha!" Joan had to laugh.

"I'll throw up my job," Philip said. "We could meet in New York—find some one-class boat—go straight to Genoa. Or better, France perhaps. To show you Paris!"

"And what after?"

"Well—Italy."

"And after that?"

"Well ——"

She nodded. "No." She shook her head.

This was one of the evenings directly after. They were both calm, trying to smile.

"It's because you're a traditionalist."

"Maybe," Joan said.

"Tradition—pooh!"

"In fact," she explained, "I've had a dreadful thought sometimes—I might run away with you if my father were dead."

"What's that you were saying about common sense then?"

"It's from my father that I inherited common sense."

Philip poked around the room, arms behind his back, shoulders out.

"It's just that I've got to make you *see* ——" he said, earnestly. "I suppose I'll have to beat you."

"I don't think you can beat me." She shook her head.

"I'll simply go mad," Philip said. "Or—run away. I'm serious. I'm crazy."

"Oh, Philip."

"I've explained all I can explain—on my side."

She wanted to ask him to explain a little more. But, no—never would she mention the word marriage to him again.

Here he was mentioning a little of it. "I'm not a settled person ——" but he broke off.

"Well, I am."

"It's so funny—I can't honestly really tell *why* I want you to run away with me—I'm simply being driven to it."

"Me, too!—driven the other way."

"Isn't it silly?"

"What are we going to do about it?" Joan asked.

"I won't shift."

"Nor I."

"Well ——" He put out his elbows helplessly.

"I won't do anything furtive," said Joan. "That's flat."

"This won't be furtive. The world will echo!"

"I dare say."

"But I'm right; you're wrong," Philip said.

"Don't you see at what a dreadful disadvantage you put me?"

"I want all of you," Philip whispered. "I want to take your life and mould it ——"

"That's just what I want."

"No, this is different."

"Yes, I dare say," said Joan. "You want to take my life and mould it—so long as it amuses you."

"That's an unfair thing to say."

"I said it," she repeated, belligerently. She saw his face. "Oh, I'm sorry, Philip. I didn't mean that."

"Sure. All right."

For a week these conversations continued. They pretended they were amused.

VII

Not always did they talk so easily. He was completely distraught, and it was remarkable that still, as always, he was two things, he was fair and he was kind; it was Joan, in fact, who had to restrain her temper. Moods were playing tricks with her. Not just moods. Couldn't he understand—being a woman was quite different from being a man?—that she simply had to wait until the Yes came some day? Didn't he know how it was when his hand touched her—like a hand on her heart, squeezing it, squirting dull fire through her arteries?

There was something thick and dark in their lives—no matter how they turned the darkness increased. She felt that they were deep in the oppressive warmth of an unending thunderstorm that did not quite materialize; there were tightenings of atmosphere, rumblings, a dark stirring—but no lightning and no rain would come.

She felt that her refusal to run away was no longer alone important. It was the obvious breach between them. But it was like a chasm very narrow at the top, defining the breach sharply; on each side then the chasm bent inward, so that at the bottom there was a tremendous, dark, wide-stretching gulf; that gulf they could never cross. Even if they lived together. Even if they married. Joan came to realize this, and it brought her sharply up. But, could this be true? It seemed true. What then was love?

"I won't go on like this," she thought, resolutely. "I'll not just wait begging for something."

VIII

"Listen," began Philip, gulping once. "We'll follow the sun down the shore. There's so much that you'll love, waiting for us, for us together. First Liguria and promontories like Porto Fino—lying like purple blooms on the water. The color of that water! We'll see Rapallo and Santa Margherita and drift along the coast to Pisa. We'll toss a coin from the tower—a soldo—do you know what a soldo is?—then inland to Florence."

He paused. She wondered if her trembling showed.

"Florence! I don't care so much for the Pieta or even the bronze doors or the Michelangelo tombs. But there's a house called the Davenzati—and in it you see the sixteenth century. Everything's preserved—the dresses laid out on the bed, the table set for dinner. And I remember up in Fiesole—two musicians making their violins whimper through the cypresses. Joan! You must come!

"And northward, too." Almost for the first time these weeks his voice was slow, dreamy. "There's a lot to see in Milan. And in Padua and Verona. Further north I remember Como and Lecco—like blue beads strung together through the mountains. And haven't I ever told you, that town called Cadenabbia—across the bay from Bellagio, where you stand on a terrace and see both lakes till they end among the hills.

"And Venice. You step from what appears to be just an ordinary railroad station—into a gondola at night—you must arrive at night—and see the floating lanterns, hear the cries, watch that water like oil on asphalt. And

talk about swimming—wait, wait till you see the Lido! Next month would be perfect. The Lido! Joan, Joan!

"But I'm getting my geography mixed up. I was starting the other way. Well, there are towns that people don't go to much, but I like them. There's Ravenna, for instance! There's a place for you. And Gubbio. Of course Gubbio is in the hills. You'll like the hill trip, Joan. You'll see Siena and Orvieto and Assisi—where they make darned good white wine—and a little place chock full of towers called—what's its name?—St. Gimignano." First his voice had been slow; now it was picking up, it was passionate. "And Bologna! All in brick. Further down is Perugia. The best restaurant in Europe is in Perugia. And wait, wait, till you taste the fettucini at Alfredo's. That's in Rome. Yes, there is a town in Italy named Rome. Then southward—I *shall* take you southward!—we'll see Ravello and Amalfi and Paestum. The bay is like blue light escaped from the mountains. There are fishing-boats with purple sails." He paused, not looking at her. He was tense, staring away. "We'll see the blue dusk in Sicily and the Mediterranean lying like a luminous blanket— My God!—Joan—Joan!"

"Stop!"

He turned.

"Don't you see you're driving me mad?"

IX

There was something in her face.

"You're driving yourself mad, too."

Look at him.

"I'll die," Joan said, "if you say another word."

"I forget."

His hands were up, the bottoms of the palms squeezing his lids.

"Oh, my dear! I've wanted so much to love you ——"

He stopped.

Something said—this was the end—all this was ending.

"Phil ——"

No, there was no use talking any more.

He walked to the window and threw it open. "My God!" He stood for a moment at the window with his elbows hunched up, staring out. Far down the street they heard the whimper of an automobile horn. The night was very hot. The night sagged.

"This is the end," he whispered.

"Do you want—to take me now?"

She looked at him steadily.

"I've told you no," he said, doggedly. "It's all or nothing. It's got to be for good."

"Sure—if."

"No," he shook his head.

"Well then, it is the end."

She felt she was a shade calmer than he. If she could hold out only one more minute ——

"I can't go on," he said.

"Neither can I."

"Who's it going to hurt most, I wonder?"

"Me," Joan said.

"I doubt it."

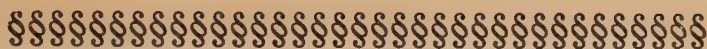
"I dare say."

"Joan—I feel this has been so unreasonable—we've both been so unreasonable—so cruel—me most, perhaps ——" He stopped. "But can't we do something—*something*? My dear, I adore you so—I *adore* you ——"

"No."

She made herself get up and walked to the door and switched the room full of light. "You talk a lot," she said. He was blinking. "Get up," she said; "I wish you'd go." He did not move and helplessly she sat down again.

He was going now. She heard the door close gently. No—steady—yes. He was gone.



Chapter Eight



I

THEREUPON began for Joan the worst but shortest weeks of her life. She would not admit to herself how bad they were, nor did she demonstrate to others any indication whatever of emotion; she clipped off her words and was hard and brittle, refusing any slightest tentative approach of sympathy; that was all. But inside she was quaking.

She worked back again and again, trying to discover some meaning in these past few weeks, some explanation to account for this failure which was itself so absurd, so meaningless. It seemed so unreasonable that all of this should have happened to *her*. What had she done to merit it? It didn't seem *fair*. It was so ridiculous, to have her life smashed up just because of three or four months which she couldn't trace back.

Thinking thus, she would then decide—the devil with him! Forget about it. Forget him.

But it wasn't easy to forget. He was always with her, part of her, whispering in her body, purring, bubbling in her brain. Then sometimes she would have to retreat to her old idea of inevitability, that all of this *must* come out all right eventually. But—would it? What was she going to do about it?

"It seems so *silly*!" she would mutter to herself. "It's

so wrong! Here I am, and all my life I've been waiting for some one. I didn't know for whom until just recently. I waited and I didn't mess around with people and I was fine. And now I want some one and I can't have him. Because—why?" She nodded. She knew why. "Well, what am I going to do? I've got to get this out of me somehow. I wonder if I'll ever fall in love with anybody again. Gee!"

But no. This was self-pity. Stop it.

II

Then who should happen along but Willard? He telephoned one evening, his voice eager. She hesitated, then told him to come. He was slow as always in speech and movement; awkward when he sat down, but, curiously, not awkward when he walked limping; said "Sorry" once or twice and "By George!" often. He watched her closely and pretended he wasn't watching, laughed quietly, scraping the char out of his pipe with a penknife she had given him, and had a great many extremely interesting things to say about embryology.

She did not tell him about Philip at first. She felt for him that profound affection which one feels for a person when one loves some one else; and she didn't want to hurt him, since he was still in love with her. But some explanations were necessary.

"So you see," she said when the story—what she told of it—was done. He flushed a little and was filling his pipe.

"Sorry I wasn't here to superintend operations. Oh—sorry."

"Really—it shouldn't bother you."

This was it—be brave—be bright and hard ——

Her heels tapped.

"You in love!" he was murmuring. He seemed to be taking it pleasantly. "By George! And tell me—how did it feel?"

"It felt like hell."

Willard limped up and laughed.

"I'm glad you know," he said.

III

Apparently there were two currents in her mind; one of them she could control, but not the other.

One was a cool current and she could direct it because it said, sensibly: "Now, this is all over and the best thing to do is to get it out of you—forget it—don't let it bruise your brain this way. Do anything you want—do something violent—but everything *is* over and so forget it."

The other was a hot current and it kept leaping, boiling, and she could not control or extinguish it. What it said was:

"It's not too late. There's still a chance. See him just once more. Think what he's feeling. Telephone him. It's not too late."

And then sometimes the currents mingled and were confused, so that it was impossible to tell them, the one from the other.

IV

Rapidly summer heat burned into Chicago. August swallowed July like a furnace. The sky came close but did not rain; the pavements melted; the sidewalks beat up an iron glare of heat.

Mr. Tilford wiped his strong fingers and said, "Vaca-

tion time now. 'There's nothing to keep us here. I've finished that grain case. Let's go to the sea.'

Mr. Tilford had been very busy preparing the obsequies for a grain company he was dissolving. Pamela and Mrs. Pomeroy were already at the sea.

"No," Joan said, "I'm going to stick it out here. I can swim every day. I don't mind the heat."

"What is this phenomenon?" sternly demanded Mr. Tilford.

He waited as if he wanted to tell her something, but that was doubtless because he was awaiting her confidence first. But of course—he must have guessed. She told him nothing.

What was it the doctors said?—oh yes—a change of scene.

She did want to tell her father all about it.

What a dreadful genius for publicity she was getting.

v

Willard again.

He said—could he help?

Well that was nice of Willard. Sure he could help. But he shouldn't ever say again, "Of course I know just how you feel." What if he did? These were not things to compare notes about. But——Heavens! Maybe he *did* feel anguish just as strongly. *Could* it be possible, was it conceivably possible, that Willard had felt the year before as she was feeling now? No—oh no! It was bad enough, feeling this way herself; she couldn't *bear* it if some one else felt the same anguish for her.

He said once, "Do let's get married."

But come—mustn't blame Willard if he couldn't choose moments. She thought, "He isn't the only one who can't."

It was funny how everything in the world got awry and biased.

Wish Willard would stay away for a while.

VI

Quite suddenly she began to feel better. The change came first as a resignation to loss, and then as cognizance of success—she had beaten down this pain—and soon she found she could actually look forward again to each new day as it began. She did not prod backward through an ambush of memories, nor did she any longer hold her future before her, staring at it. One couldn't plot one's life. Philip was wrong. Life was a chain of little things, cause and effect. Let life come on.

She was alone in the house, and for several days had seen no one; it was rather fun, being quite by herself—she swam every morning and loafed the rest of the day. Mr. Tilford was in Boston—a sudden trip—and twice he telegraphed Joan suggesting that she meet him there, then proceed with him to their place in Maine. She was on the point of saying yes.

But something kept her in Chicago. She felt she could not tear herself away just yet. She wanted—now that she was calm again—to survey this ruin—calmly. At first she had clung to Chicago, feeling like a general clinging doggedly to a battle-scarred field; now she felt like an umpire cleaning up the remains. Or perhaps—she almost laughed—like a criminal holding close to the scene of a crime. Whose crime? No one's.

One morning she awoke to see the sun streaming through her broad windows and she was conscious that another change in her mind had come. She had not forced this change. But it was there. Startlingly, she burst into

tears. This was the first time she had cried during all the Philip episode. She cried like a baby—because it became clear to her that she had been wrong. The No in her soul had at last become a Yes. She would go to him.

Joan jumped up, happy, wiping away the tears; she sat rocking on the edge of the bed. In an extraordinary way—without looking at any mirror—she felt her tear-smudged face become alive again. It expanded and became alive. It had been dead many weeks. She felt exhilarated and wanted to dress quickly, but tensely savoring this tremendous change she paused.

She would no longer let pride, tradition, self-respect keep her from love; she must drop everything but love overboard. She felt actual realization now of something that had been in her mind vaguely, stubbornly, all along, that Philip's point of view, after all, was valid, too—as valid as hers. Well, she would submit, she would accept his point of view. She would go to him.

Yes, she was submitting, but in her submission she felt no sense of defeat. Instead, she felt victory arising from tranquillity. She had defeated, true enough, that sense of frustration which all these weeks had tortured her. That was a good victory. But this other—this decision to go with him—was of a different, less intense and plangent quality. She felt only that a normal, right result had come about. To reach it had required struggle and sacrifice. Well, what else were struggle and sacrifice for?

Joan felt glee, a solemn sort of glee. She held herself tight; she sat rocking on the edge of the bed. She cried again.

Yes, she would go with him. All she had to do now was act. Finally lightning had shot down, dissipating all the clouds.

She watched the white pools of sunlight run like quick-silver over her rug. She twisted her bare foot in the sunlight, shivering.

Of course it was a miracle that at this precise moment he should telephone.

"All right," Joan said, soberly, into the telephone. "I'll come with you—yes!"



Chapter Nine



I

HE CAME late in the afternoon—first moment he could get away—when the sun was a little cooler against the blinds. She wore the lightest thing she could find. She wanted to be all in white. And what a casual meeting it was! “Tea—I’d love to—iced tea, maybe?” Indeed he could have iced tea. Sarah came in, and how cheery was his “Hello Sarah! Fine hot day, isn’t it?”

He was extremely thin and must have lost five pounds, but he was not as restless as usual; some of his excitability must have evaporated. Or perhaps he was tired. Very simply they arranged everything. “All right.” How simple it was and how divinely exhilarated it made her feel. And happy. Lucky her father and the family were away. That was the one shadow, her father. Meanwhile the empty house was a Godsend. The irritating and distressing mechanics of elopement no longer existed. All she had to do was pack and go.

“No, you can’t have a trunk. We’re travelling light; we’re poor.”

“My darling, I must have a trunk.”

He shook his head.

“All right. I’ll pack everything in a paper bag, if you want.”

"No, two light suitcases."

"But we're not poor," Joan protested, "I have my own money—quite a lot."

"This is my party," he said, and would not listen to another word.

Today was Friday. He needed a week to get clear of the office—no—five days would do.

"There's nothing else to hold me."

"Your mother, maybe?" she suggested. She had never met Philip's mother. He never talked about his family much. He put out his elbows and shrugged.

Five days. They would not be long days. Then they would go to New York. Just before sailing, she would call up her father. That would be cruel. Could she manage it in any other way? A one-class boat to Cherbourg, Philip said. They would have a week in Paris, perhaps ten days; then wander through Italy.

"It's funny. I dare say I am throwing up my career—because this is for keeps, Joan—and there's a lot of prejudice in the world. But I can work in Europe. And for years I've wanted a chance to study. We'll winter in England and you'll never see me outside the British Museum."

Joan said: "Give up your career—nonsense! This is a little holiday."

He said he had saved \$3,317.50, and he thought this should keep them a year. And while in Europe he could earn money writing. And who knew, perhaps the Roosevelt book might sell?

Joan had a great deal to do. She must fix up her own money matters first—she was of age—must see Mr. Powell at the Eastern Trust. She would take along her allowance, just to be reasonably comfortable in case of emergency. And must get a passport.

"We'll have to telegraph for it," Joan said. "But what an idiot I am. I have a passport—I got it in March, when I was going away—just before we met."

She must get some clothes—a tweed travelling outfit, a bathing-suit, some handkerchiefs and stockings.

"You'll need woolens," Philip said.

The afternoon sped quickly over. He had to go—working tonight. It would be a shock for him to leave the office—shock to the office, too. The humorous Mr. Jones would miss him. Meanwhile they would be very casual and easy these five days. Tomorrow it would be four days. And then three days.

"I'll call up tomorrow," Philip concluded, "and of course see you in the evening. I'll be busy as the devil. Oh, by the way, some people are coming over Sunday night—a date I can't break. Come along? Good." Five days. Four days. Three days. Then the Century sliding out of Chicago at noon, then a quick day in New York, then the boat with its white decks and the steep shining dip of blue water. Five days. And then—life.

II

Joan got ready her things. She saw Philip for scattered moments only. They did not kiss much, or make love. They were both sober before this adventure, and wanted to wait; neither said so, but they understood perfectly. "It's like before being married," she thought. There was a little pang in that. But what of it? Who cared?

Only once during the few days did she feel any impulse to withdraw. That was late at night—curious how Rosalind was in her mind—when she thought of her mother. Would her life be very different, had her mother lived?

Joan wondered. She knew, although Mr. Tilford had never said much, what a reckless, lovely woman Rosalind had been. Joan decided that this adventure of hers was just the sort of thing—yes—Rosalind would have done. But?

Why *was* she running away with Philip? What *had* driven her to this desperate course? But not another word of *that* kind—that was the sort of thing which had caused her such rage and disorder in the weeks recently passed. Still, thinking over her questions, Joan felt that she had given in just a little too soon—another day, another moment, *he* might have given in. But she hadn't willed herself into this. It had simply happened. And, she thought, and she hugged the thought lovingly, in the end, she *would* win—she knew. Let this adventure start, she was sure how it would end.

And, anyway, no use worrying now.

III

On Saturday an immense clumsily packed box was delivered to the house. She opened it excitedly. In the box were rows upon rows of olives, then tiers upon tiers of olives, and almost each olive was of a different species, a different kind—big golden olives, tiny wrinkled purple olives, green olives, small hard black olives; and in every one, she found, was a different sort of filling, in some not the ordinary pimento or anchovy or chocolate stuffing, but, tinily crumpled and folded, absurd small snatches of paper with notes on them. Joan was radiant the whole day. She never could resist that sort of pleasant attention. Must have taken him all day to make that package. He knew she liked olives.

IV

On Sunday night they went downtown to dinner and it was an unsuccessful dinner. The heat was oppressive, hot only as a breathless August night in Chicago can be; they could scarcely move without effort and to breathe seemed breathing steam. After dinner they panted to the drive and waited for a bus; the bus-tops were jammed with shirt-sleeved people making for the parks and beaches, and they had to wait twenty minutes for a bus with empty seats. Philip was in a hurry—those friends of his were coming to the flat for a brief farewell. But he refused to take a taxi—might as well start economizing now, he said. After the excitement of these past few days, each felt, and hated to confess it, something of a let-down—but, after all, they couldn't be having climaxes all the time.

Back in his flat they sat and wilted, and the conversation wilted and drooped too. Their friends came in. A lad named Richter fussed in a corner with a gramophone. Joan smiled at O'Leary, the big fellow with the owl-glasses; she remembered he had been their companion that night with the hijackers months before. Five days—but three had passed—now it was only two days. Tuesday at noon they started. Philip was in a corner. He had appeared shocked that one of the boys had brought Martin. Some of them, notably Corcoran, tried bravely to keep conversation going. As if through a hot cloud Joan heard scattered lines:

"But impressionism is a ticklish business; it depends too much on the guy being impressed."

"No, beauty is more than that. Beauty takes brains. It is a talent—sometimes a genius."

"Well, it seems to me that writing is a process of suffusion. You get full of a thing and it comes out. Like sweat."

Richter was playing slow, whining music by Rimsky-Korsakov.

"Love is a reciprocal process. It should be a sort of policy—a policy of mutual and reciprocal completion."

That was Philip—the last line. First word he had said in a long time. He was restless in a corner, poking about with one leg stretched straight, the heel tapping the floor. Joan knew several of the girls, and she smiled as Doris Barron dropped in, her hair hammered gold foil, waved and carved like metal gold. Joan flirted with O'Leary a little, and liked him very much; she was moved to flirtation partly because Martin was so obviously flirting with Phil. "Who is she? Oh, I don't know her very well," Corcoran said. No, flirting wasn't the right word. Martin was extremely proprietary. She whispered to Philip several times, and once led him, laughing, toward the kitchen. Philip was irritated and bored, but he always looked at her when she started whispering.

They talked, desultorily. One of the girls asked about Richard Northway. There was a little silence. None of the girls seemed to like Shirley much. Corcoran opened one of the windows wider, saying, "Whew!" The rumble of a car floating in the heat down State Street reached them.

"Let's go to the lake," Patterson said.

"Pat, there's an absolute zero, you say. What's absolute boiling point?"

"My Lord! this."

That was Philip's rather tight voice again. That lovely girl with the Flemish face and red hair, she had a delightful first name, was browsing among the books; Joan had

known her two years before at school. Puffs of talk expired in the room. The words did not float, but dropped.

Phil was catching her eye.

"Let's go down to the corner and have a soda."

The girls were crowded along the couch; Joan felt sticky. Perhaps it was only the heat, but she was miserable. Philip found no one else wanted a soda; they continued to sit. O'Leary was chuckling and sat down next to Joan, talking to her. One of the boys, Patterson, was explaining on the other side that he had just finished an exhaustive series of experiments trying to photograph these new things—photons—which were evidently *particles* of light. Ordinarily Joan would have been interested. But not tonight.

"Ham and eggs," suggested Corcoran.

"No, ice-cream." That was Phil again. He did seem to want to get away.

Joan drifted over toward him and saw his eyes bend a spell of tremendous adoration; he appeared uneasy, however, and Joan, too, felt again an uncertain nervousness, a sense of definite foreboding. The heat was powdering, sifting down. Outside, fewer street cars rumbled. There was something wrong. The atmosphere was wrong. Still, as soon as they got out of Chicago—only two days now!

She thrilled a little. She felt that in this party she was saying good-by to most of her life. In this party was suspended invisibly so much of the Chicago she knew. And it was all passing. She was saying good-by to home, to family, to tradition, to freedom, to all her old self. Perhaps she wouldn't return for years. Perhaps when she did return—could she ever recapture the old familiar things? All of it for love. Two days now. A good bargain! Love.

v

Martin had the most unusual lips she had ever seen, Joan recollected; there was no cleft in the upper lip, and they were shiny and, unrouged, unnaturally red; otherwise, though, she seemed an extremely attractive girl. She was small and fleet. Her breasts were small and high apart. Martin came up to her, smiling mildly; Joan smiled, too, and decided she ought to be friendly.

"We met at Macmillan's party—you remember?" Joan proffered.

Martin only chuckled; then said, abruptly, "What do you think of Philip, anyway?"

Joan was a little disconcerted, but she laughed frankly. "A lot."

"So did I, once." Martin vaguely smiled.

"That's interesting," Joan said, "I'd like to hear about it."

Martin shook her head. She concluded, "By the way—at that party of Macmillan's—you should have stayed." Again she laughed.

She and Joan wandered out into the kitchen. "I want an apple," Martin said. "Doesn't Philip keep fruit and things here?" Evidently she knew all about the run of the flat.

Joan let the water tap run hard and filled herself a glass of water. It was tepid.

"There's the ice-box there," Martin pointed.

"Oh, I know!"

One of the boys came into the kitchen looking for a match.

Joan and Martin talked desultorily, Joan sipping the water, Martin munching her apple.

"Philip's going away, he says," Martin mentioned. "Are you going with him?"

"Well," Joan said, "yes."

"Good for you."

Martin smiled frankly; but Joan decided that she hated this girl. She wanted to say, "What's it to you?" but she hesitated; active uneasiness kept her from speech. Martin was poised on the sink, just tapping a slipper against the floor; the bone of her instep showed through sheer black stockings.

Joan was feeling things very keenly; she recognized in this heat the extreme importance of nervous emotion; she knew that if anything untoward should happen tonight, nothing would count except the way she *felt*. A deep and profound uncertainty was shaking her. All of her life was behind her now; everything was gone beyond recapture.

"You're not very talkative," Martin bantered. Her voice was a little throaty.

"You're rather interested in Philip yourself, aren't you?" Joan said, brightly.

Martin shrugged. "People come—people go."

Joan felt she was liable to be rude in a moment; she didn't want to be rude. She made to leave the kitchen.

"There's only one thing wrong with Philip—he can't be trusted," Martin said.

"Oh!" Joan turned. "That's not true!" Come—forget this confounded girl. She walked nervously toward the front room where all of them were still chattering. Martin followed her, as if in apology or perhaps in protest, then disappeared into one of the side-rooms.

"Time to go."

That was Corcoran's voice. They were breaking up. Philip looked at her and he seemed apprehensive.

He would walk home with her a little way. At the corner they waved farewells to the others. Joan felt an extraordinary uneasiness still.

But—forget this nonsense. What on earth was wrong with her? These dissonances didn't matter. Courage!

VI

"Joan," said Philip, gently.

They were walking alone toward the lake.

"Yes, sweet?"

She wanted to hug his arm, to hold him close, thus to wipe out with the strong brush of his personality these silly worries, these nameless fears.

"I'm awfully sorry that girl came."

"Who? Oh ——"

"I didn't know she'd come. She's a devil."

"Philip darling, don't worry, don't bother."

That was right, she must comfort him. But he was laughing bitterly.

"I could have killed her—talking to you that way."

Philip was walking straight ahead with his arms straight.

"Why, it wasn't anything you could help."

"I wonder." He paused. "Of course she told you. She's a devil. Or made you guess." His voice was steely.

"Guess what?"

"I'm terribly sorry," Philip muttered.

"What do you mean, Phil?"

"Oh God help me! God help me! She didn't!"

He stood transfixed. She turned. He was in agony.

"But," whispered Joan, "good Heavens!"

She had guessed. Her eyes were very taut and wide and began to hurt.

"You mean you and Martin ——"

"Yes."

"But good Heavens!" Joan exclaimed. She gripped herself. "I want to know only one thing—when?"

"I didn't dream—I didn't want to bring this up ——"

"Thanks."

She was stock-still staring at him.

"When was it?"

"Oh, Joan—you'll misunderstand. It wasn't in the least important—you can't understand how these things happen ——"

"When was the last time—that's all I want to know."

"I thought she told you," Philip groaned.

"When?" repeated Joan.

"About a month ago—after Macmillan's party. You remember the state I was in. We quarrelled ——"

Oh! That was the night he had first wanted to sleep with *her*!

Phil took her arm to start her walking, but she did not move.

"Who'd you say it was?"

"Martin."

"Congratulations."

She stood still, staring. They were at Ontario Street.

"I think it's dirty," Joan said.

He shrugged helplessly. "I feel like hell. I wish I could lie. I can't. The minute that Martin stepped in the room ——"

"It's so unbelievable!" Joan protested.

"You don't understand."

"That night at the party! You couldn't have me and so you just took some one else!"

"It was you in my heart—you I wanted."

"Me?"

They walked a block.

"Certainly."

His voice was lame. She was hot and weak all over.

"To think you could have had me—any number of times—aren't I desirable? Aren't I beautiful?—to take that—*that*——!"

"Joan, you don't understand."

They reached the Drive.

"Well, this about ends it, doesn't it?" muttered Joan.

"Good Lord—no!"

"And to think—Tuesday."

"Joan—Joan——"

"It's so *unbelievable*!"

"You don't understand at all."

"I do. Good-by. To think——"

"Joan! Wait, please——"

"Good-by."

VII

He overtook her at the next corner. Quite forcibly he kept her from getting into a taxi.

"Look here—I'm sorry. It was a foolish thing to have done. I'll regret it—now—till the day I die."

"I hope so," Joan said.

"But you'll regret it more—don't you see that?—if you don't disregard it now. Joan, after all that tragic wastage, after all the weariness and frustration—finally we were *right*——"

"Exactly."

"Well, I implore you—don't ruin all the rest—of our *lives*! Don't ruin all of you and all of me—forever—just because a month ago I did something foolish. And

was honest enough—silly enough—to confess it. Of course you're angry. Sure. *But ———*"

"I wish you'd let me go."

They walked past the big hotel at the corner.

"I'm going home," Joan said.

"Listen."

He stopped dead on the sidewalk. She walked a few paces and then turned. They stood a few feet apart.

"Listen."

"It's so unbelievable!"

"Joan—listen!" She saw his shadow move forward under the arc light. His face exploded. "Will you marry me?"

"No," she said.

VIII

She left her taxi near the Drake. What she wanted to do now was go in some very dark corner like a whipped animal and hide. No, she wouldn't do that—she'd walk and try to hold her head high. Let anyone look at her—let them try to guess. She would walk all the way home. She would arrive home just in time for breakfast and give Sarah a nice surprise. She passed the dark bulwark of the Drake. "I want to get just as tired as I can," she said, "I want to get so tired I'll drop." The lake was silent and sullen. There was not a ripple. In the park hundreds of people lay with their faces pressed against the dry yellow grass. "I want to get so tired I'll *drop!*" she repeated. Along the grass, along the beach, almost in the water itself, half-naked men and women, their children knotted around them, tried to sleep. Some of the children were naked in the water. Some were walking through the trees, sobbing. Now—walk—walk! How

far was it to her house? Fullerton would be a mile. Then a mile to Diversey. Then to Belmont. Then—what was next?—Irving Park and then Lawrence—then—but she didn't remember. It didn't matter. She would walk. She must quell this trembling somehow. And in the morning she would sleep, she would wake up and it would still be hot; she would look through her mail and perhaps read the newspaper; and then—and then ——? After that there would be all of the next day, and after that all of the day after; and so on until there were no more days. A family lay sprawled on the sidewalk ahead of her. She circled it. She smelled garlic. And so—and so—and so —— Forget it all. Don't let any tiny trace or smudge of it stay in her mind. Scrape it all out and cut it out and *keep* it out. Forget it! Walk. And walk.

IX

Joan knew he would be away the next day toward noon. He never had lunch at home. Was yesterday still today—or had a thousand æons passed? She had the key. All she wanted to do —— But what was the use? Oh well, make it clear—she wouldn't be equivocal—make this final! The way he had *run* after her taxi ——!

She wheeled the car down the slope and waved to Sarah, good Sarah, her face blue and gray. The day was a shade cooler. But already thousands were trekking toward the beaches. Driving the car was like piloting a needle through flies. Still there was just a ripple of air now; the air was rippling all over like very quiet shallow water over sand. Here she was—Rush Street.

Philip's apartment didn't look like much from the outside. But inside it was nice and actually cool. Lucky he wasn't there. She would have died. It was apparent that

she would die if she ever saw him again. He must not ever see her again. She must make that perfectly clear. She closed the door behind her gently, the key still in her hand.

The books were piled high along the shelves, but everything else was packed up. Oh yes! Corcoran was coming to take the books. The rooms were bare except for the books and the piano which he was giving to Richter. There was a big trunk, half packed, visible in the next room, and two open suitcases here in the front room. The stack of papers was still on the shelf where it had been the night before. He was probably at the office saying good-by. Wonder what he'd do with the steamship passage? The room was incredibly neat. He was too damned neat.

What should she say?

She bit her lip and surveyed the room warily, as if to seize forever its memory. She had loved this room. She was puzzled because there was no piece of paper handy. She stood there helpless, puzzled. The problem of *finding* a pencil and piece of paper was altogether too much for her. Then she had an idea and walked to the piano. Yes, dust on it.

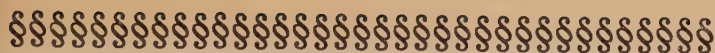
She wet her finger and wrote clearly in the dust on the piano.

Yes, that did it.

She stared and laughed and then slid cautiously from the house, hurrying down the stairs. Hello! the landlady. She bowed. The landlady seemed surprised. Good-by.

To keep from trembling she bit her teeth tight.

¶ BOOK III: *Joan and a Ghost*



Chapter One



I

IN MAINE Joan left summer behind. She arrived in mid-September and already autumn was pushing hard. In the woods the pines held a permanent bronze sheen, and along the paths their needles were packed into a smooth bronze mattress. Over the mattress, like feathers, tossed bright red leaves from the other trees. At low tide a glaze of shining sand covered the beach, and in the shallows just beyond, under the rocks, autumn waves were beginning to shake loose the mountain crabs, minnows, and jellyfish from their transparent summer tranquillity. Winds were picking up, and from the woods at night kept coming a long low rustle.

The Tilford place was a bungalow above Portland, a shack almost directly on the beach, but high enough so that plenty of shade slanted down from the rocks behind. Inside it was bright with orange chintz and flowers in purple jars, and later burning red leaves from the forest; the roof was shingled in green and on two sides there were wide screened porches. Joan had not been there for two years, and it was fun rediscovering her friends, saying hello to the villagers and fishermen again. It was almost too cold for swimming. The air at night was clear right to the separate stars.

Mr. Tilford had returned again to Boston for a few weeks, and Mrs. Pomeroy was in charge. Mrs. Pomeroy was investigating a Czecho-Slovakian physical-culture cure, and had no time for the woods and the beach. Joan and Pamela spent the days as they pleased, with only one injunction against them—they were forbidden to leave their bathing-shoes, wet and sandy, on the porch outside. Ralph came up from New York for a week-end with three friends of Pamela's from Princeton, and they built big fires on the beach and watched the shadows dance careening toward the water.

Joan was not patient enough to fish, but this year she went into Portland and bought a boat; they had canoes already and one rowboat, but she wanted a sailboat. She found what she wanted—a neat, swift fourteen-foot cat-boat; it was just small enough so that she could manage it alone. Of course all she had to do was steer and yell at Pamela to avoid the boom. She had one spill turning into the wind too suddenly, and one disconcerting half-day becalmed two miles from shore, a little far to swim. Her fishermen friends combined a splendid indifferent skepticism with much good advice. She named the boat Simon, for no special reason she could recall.

But boat or no boat, tramping in the woods alone was best. She found a sketch map she had started to make two years before; it wasn't accurate because she didn't bother with a compass, but it was enough to indicate both the main roads and the scarred trails twisting through the peninsula. The longest hike she made was to Nephew Point, almost up to Granite Creek, and at Sparrow Cliff one day she sprained an ankle, jumping back in shock before a pheasant flushed and booming. She spotted some new trails, and seriously thought of waiting till October 30th, when hunting might begin. She had never had a

gun in her hands. But it might be fun to try. A whisking dip in the sea just before noon was still possible, but the ocean was whipping up, and soon even the afternoons were cold. But there were a few hours every day sure of sun, and even if it was late autumn, here she was, brown and tough again, all softness beaten out of her, tough like the sand.

Mr. Tilford came up the last week in October to take them home.

"Ninny," he chided Joan, when he saw how she hated to go, "why didn't you come in July? You've only had six weeks here. Preposterous."

She did not want to go back, but she knew that she must go sometime and it was no good just to wait and watch her distaste harden and intensify.

They arrived back in Chicago.

"You look like a nice hard berry," Sarah announced.

"Oh, Sarah! I'm so glad to see you again!"

She went up to her room and began to unpack.

"Now," she said to herself, "I've got to get this damned thing out of me somehow."

II

She did not think much about it articulately, but slowly her resolution had hardened and now she was only waiting. She had fought against it for a little, but no longer. And of course it was simple, simple as rolling off a log. Simple as hell.

She came across a nice, friendly boy at a party one evening; his name was Dahlberg and she remembered vaguely having met him some time before, years before, probably at some similar North-Shore party; he was an exceptionally good-looking youngster, fresh and young.

He was blond and had greenish eyes which changed color curiously. He fastened himself to Joan early and she was glad to flirt with him, especially because she found not many people were watching her this evening; people were not following her nor looking at her intently when she turned and happened to discover them. She remembered in contrast that evening at Macmillan's.

"Of course. I'd be delighted," Joan said.

Dahlberg had suggested taking her home. They were up in Lake Forest and she had come by train.

"Stay the night, Joan, won't you?" her hostess asked. A flicker passed in her mind.

"No—thanks. I don't think so."

They climbed into Dahlberg's car and began the long night drive. Dahlberg was a very collegiate youngster and wore a purple, green, and silver transversely-striped tie. The road cut into Chicago, a wide, sliding, concrete ribbon, a spoke in the great three-quarter wheel of highways radiating from the city. Dahlberg was hopefully attentive. This evening had begun as an episode in curiosity; let it end as such. What did it matter—what did anything matter? The lovely light through those elm branches, scratched against the moon!

"Yes, I think you turn here," Joan said.

They reached her house. It was late and luckily Sarah and Bessie and everyone would be asleep; the family was away somewhere, week-ending. Joan felt cool. She asked her young man to come in.

"Gosh! that's fine, Joan!"

The drive had been cold and on entering he rubbed his hands briskly over the radiator. They saw their breath, even in the house, and she switched on an electric fire.

"Shall I get some food?"

"No. I'll have to be going soon."

"Oh, not for a while," protested Joan.

They sat in the big couch. He talked about the party, about the hostess, about the Wisconsin game the week before; but she couldn't find anything to talk about. Later he hesitated, smiling charmingly, and said something, she didn't quite hear, about her hair. She smiled and tried to look happy, and edged closer. He kissed her once or twice, but there was something taut and hard in her body and she could not give reality to her kisses. He kissed her several times more and she felt herself respond finally; but then he looked at his watch alertly and moved away.

"Look here. I've got to go."

She shook her head. He sat down again.

How was it you managed these things? What was it you were supposed to do? Didn't he understand? Should she just declare herself? No. What a nuisance it was, he being so stupid! Now ——

"Please don't go."

"Gosh Joan, I gotta!"

"Well—but wait."

"It's after three."

"I know. Does it matter? Does anything matter?"

Kissing her slowly, he waited. Then she found all desire had left her and that she was stone cold and that anyway this was a terrible thing she was doing, an appalling thing. But it was necessary somehow to do it and doggedly she tried again to make herself seductive to him, to entrap and seduce him so that meaninglessly she could sully herself, sully herself in perverse allegiance to her past.

"Please—why not stay?"

"Joan!"

"Well—for an hour or two."

He looked up, shocked.

"Sure," she said, bravely.

"Gosh—Joan—I couldn't!"

"Well!"

"Oh, I couldn't *think*—of staying ——"

She saw he was not revolted, but simply scared and shocked. But a tight wind of fury came over her and she threw his coat at him, calling, "Get out—you fool!—go away!" He retreated, stumbling to the door, and her voice followed him: "Get out! I'll hit you! Get out!" Her arms were flexed with the little-finger ends of her curled fists pointed at him.

A week later she was shopping at Field's and came across Freddie Bishop at the book counter.

"Tea!" insisted Freddie, who had been flirting with her vaguely, very vaguely, off and on for years.

"Splendid," Joan agreed. "Tea!"

Well now—Freddie ——

Freddie had an extremely elegant figure and played ping-pong expertly; he had a very short nose and a wide upper lip on which a small tan mustache was perched. When walking he held his head slightly upward as if in fear the mustache might fall off, but mistaken people thought he was supercilious. They slid down seven flights of marble stairs and both laughing crossed to Huyler's and ordered tea. The cakes were very good. Even though she was sure Freddie had cream in his hair, he was amusing.

"You're such an exquisite, Freddie."

"I have to be," he said. "How perfectly precious of you to notice."

"Do you do it to amuse yourself—or by necessity?"

"To amuse you."

"I'm glad you like me, Freddie."

"I adore you."

"Splendid," Joan mocked. She waited till he watched her and then let her eyes grow serious. "I've been rather unhappy, Freddie."

"No!"

"Yes."

"I don't believe it for a moment. You're too *frightfully* entrancing."

"Oh no," she laughed. "But I'd like to be."

He looked keenly at her, pretending he understood.

"Oh no, you don't know what I mean." She hesitated.

"But I'll tell you, later."

"I'm simply *aghast* in excitement. How priceless, quite priceless this is!"

"You have no idea," Joan said, smiling steadily.

"Oh, but I'm sure it will be *splendid*!"

"I am too," she said.

"I feel we are rilly getting intimate," he declared. "You have always been so pricelessly cold before. But now I feel I *understand* you!"

"Good for you," Joan agreed.

She drank her second cup, steadying herself.

"Listen, Freddie, you're a wicked person. Come away with me somewhere."

"How priceless!"

"Come with me somewhere."

"I'm choking with excitement," Freddie said. "But where—what do you mean, somewhere?"

His eyes tilted a little.

"Well, Freddie, don't be stupid. Guess."

She looked at him over the tea. Now again she felt herself sick and trembling. She felt her smile was hardening and she made it soften.

"This is most unfortunate," Freddie confessed, at last.

"What?"

"This is *appalling*!"

"What?" she demanded again.

"Don't *you* know? I thought everybody knew. I thought you were joking me about it when we came in."

"What do you mean?"

"Well," it was his turn to say, "guess."

Her mind opened as if cut by a cleaver.

"I'm so excruciatingly sorry," he said, very directly. "Please, Joan—don't be angry—don't go away." He tried to take her hand. "I'm so awfully sorry. I am, really."

"Well, don't be."

"If only I could explain!"

"Please don't," Joan snapped.

She got up and left, and after a walk on the Boulevard caught a bus and went home. There was nowhere else to go. Really there was nothing at all to do these days. She did not think of Freddie, but once or twice she caught herself biting her lip hard and felt that her face was strained and awry. Arriving home, she laughed, she did not know whether at herself or not.

A week or so later she thought of some one.

She remembered he had asked her to wear a floppy hat sometime, and wondered what on earth he meant by a floppy hat. Rummaging in the closet, she found something and wondered if its crushed soft crown was floppy enough. Well now, this was over. She must destroy herself and destroy herself as soon as possible, and since it was her mind which said so, her body must arise and follow quickly—yes. She made up her mind this time to take no chance of going wrong, of later humiliation; she would simply declare herself outright at once.

At Macmillan's house she paused for a moment and felt both excited and content. After all, this was going to be a good thing, and she should have had it a long, long time before. The house was dark, as usual, but she was sure he must be at home; she felt him in the house. Peeking up now, she could see the dim light in the middle room; perhaps she should have telephoned first. But nonsense! It was more fun this way.

She rang, and Macmillan came to the door. He recognized her, of course, and laughed to conceal his surprise; then Joan saw he was more than surprised, he was astonished, and she thought she detected embarrassment condensing the laugh into a smile.

"So you have come!"

She was for saying what was in her mind immediately. But he led her in; she had not taken off her hat; then she saw that some one was there, sitting on the cushions. The some one was Martin.

Joan raised her hand a little. She turned. "Bah!" she wanted to exclaim.

Martin rose, not awkwardly, separating her lips in her strange sensual smile. "Hello! Nice to see you," Martin said.

Joan could not stand another moment of that slight, throaty voice. She fled and Macmillan followed her, protesting, to the door.

"Oh, sorry!" Martin called.

Joan fled the house; she seemed to hear behind her Macmillan's expostulatory stare and Martin's reconsidered laughter.

Joan walked all the way home, down Wilson eastward.

"Bah!"

Good God! Weren't there any male whores?

III

Ralph burst in one night. He was red and excited. But on entering he seemed to wilt and lose courage, and for a moment Joan thought he was on the verge of some proposal to her. Good old Ralph. If everything else should finally fail her, always there was Ralph. That was something.

"Joan," he began, "I want to tell you—an important thing."

"Sure. Go ahead."

"It's rather difficult to tell you. But I must—right away."

She sat down next to him.

"Well," he began, not looking at her, "I've chased after you so long—it must be six or seven years now—and we've had such fun together—I've always thought, sometime, why, you'd fall in love with me; and I'd marry you. You see?"

She nodded, chin low.

"Well, that lasted for six or seven years"—he gulped—"until last year. I didn't know it then, but, uh, something happened. And I wasn't absolutely sure till just now—absolutely sure. And as soon as I was sure, of course I had to tell you—right away. You see?" He was turning to her eagerly and in confusion. "Well, I'm *absolutely* sure now. Something did happen a year ago. Pamela."

But of course she should have guessed! And—this was splendid!

Words tumbled from him inarticulately.

"I've never heard better news," she echoed. "It's splendid, Ralph. Splendid!"

"Oh, Joan!"

"You know—this makes me happier than anything I've heard in a year!"

"It's wunnerful, Joan," he mooned.

She leaned close and kissed him.

"Well!"

"It's wunnerful."

"You said you must tell me. Have you told Pamela?"

"I should say not. Not yet!"

He started from the room, now red again.

"But I'm going to now," he called from the stairs.

IV

Sometimes she thought back. It was almost six months now. The year was ending. Winter had come and Christmas was in sight; the world was white, cold, and dead. Yes, it was almost six months now. What was it Macmillan had said about ecstasy? It would turn to stone—yes.

But it was better not to think, not to remember.

V

At a private showing of "Dr. Caligari" she met Corcoran; her first instinct was to avoid him, because she knew he would talk idly about things which were not idle to her; but he was so delighted at meeting her and obviously so eager to see her again that she relented, and after the performance they walked toward the lake together. Corcoran she had known now since English 5—in other words, three or four years; she had always liked him and never known him at all well. He asked about Fay. He

was writing plays and Joan remembered his undergraduate efforts had been brilliant.

Philip was in New York, Corcoran said. Yes? No one had heard from him in detail. Yes? But he was in New York—somewhere. This was the first news of Philip, however indirect and vague, that Joan had had since August, and she was glad to have it: now at least she could place him. But she didn't want to know where he was too definitely, nor was she in the least curious about his address. She would never see him again; that was the one verity.

Corcoran was amusing and he did not refer to Philip again, nor, and Joan was glad, did he mention the last time she had seen him, that dreadful night in his rooms. They walked to the lake briskly. The wind howling across the corner of Congress Street almost blew them over. Joan wore a magnificent mink coat, a birthday gift from her father; her birthday, November twenty-seventh, had come a week or so before; she had upbraided her father for this preposterous extravagance, and wore the coat with careful glee. Corcoran in a raccoon coat looked like a mountain. Only his ankles showed. The wind was carrying tiny particles of ice and snow. Corcoran suggested a look at the unfinished columns, even if the night was so cold, out on Soldiers Field; they were splendid, he said, in this white snow-pebbled weather. She was glad to walk.

"I know a delightful restaurant near here," he told her, hopping to keep warm between the high marble columns of the field. "Game to try it?"

"Of course."

"Good Joan."

"I'm so glad we met."

The restaurant was a Chinese joint near Sixteenth

Street and she hadn't tasted more delicious chow mein in years. The coffee was steaming hot, the rolls crisp so they dented when you touched them. The restaurant was affable, but with a whispering atmosphere to it; very soon, as if sheltered together against the cold outside, they were warmly confidential, leaning toward one another across the small table; and soon with lowered heads, so that, not looking at each other, faces downward, the tops of their heads almost touching, they were themselves whispering. Outside they heard occasional moans from the taxi horns. The snow was banking up against the windows. Corcoran leaned back, smiling, to describe his new play, and Joan was delighted to find how much it interested her. He drew a diagram of his second act on the tablecloth and eagerly she helped to fill it. Her face was flushed, leaning forward under the lamps. She saw him twice staring at her, and once, working on the diagrams, their fingers touched, and she felt a shock of contact. They had second cups of coffee and at the end Joan thought she ought to go. But she didn't want to go; she waited pensively and listened to the wind.

"You are so lovely—and I never felt it till tonight."

"I'm afraid," Joan said.

Soon he was whispering love to her across the little table. She remembered later the position of the spoons, one transversely crossing a coffee saucer. She kept her eyes averted, but felt pleasure and waited. No, he wasn't a silly liar; he didn't pretend he had been in love with her before. In fact, he was saying he had rather disliked her during these years, until recently—yes—it was just something this night, tonight, perhaps only tonight—quite possibly never again. He leaned closer.

"Listen, Joan. Come with me, will you?"

"All right," she whispered.

VI

Very early in the morning she kissed him and slipped away. She found herself in a strange stairway and she stumbled down till she reached the street. At a corner a cab was passing. She hailed it and stepped in—paused—then gave her address. The chauffeur tipped his hat and the wheels started screeching as the chains gripped the ice. The inside of the taxi was very cold; she huddled in the blanket and lit a cigarette. She smoked very seldom. There was a bite on the inside of her mouth and two buttons had popped off her dress.

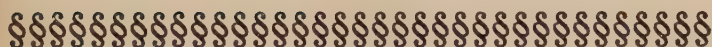
Back home half an hour later—what a long drive across the city—she slipped into the house and, scorning evasion, peeped into the kitchen and said hello to Bessie and Sarah.

"My, my!" Sarah rebuked her.

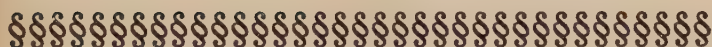
"I'll be down to breakfast in a minute," Joan said. She fled upstairs and changed her clothes. She saw herself in the mirror, the simple, childlike direct blue eyes under the very dark square frame of hair. She almost never used cosmetics but now she picked up some lip rouge and smeared her lips scarlet, laughing.

Going down to breakfast, she sobered.

"I'll be damned," she kept repeating to herself. "I'll be damned."



Chapter Two



I

CHRISTMAS was coming. Always the Tilfords kept Christmas as a rite—a family rite; Mark was as faithful to Christmas as had been Haviland, and Haviland as Jasper before him. Christmas meant a few days of relaxation to the Tilfords, a pause and a glimpse backward, a scrutiny of the year ahead. Always they had a tree, the largest they could find, and had dinner at noon strictly for themselves, although in the afternoon all manner of cousins and relatives and friends dropped in; Joan's memories of Christmas went back to her earliest youth; they were stamped in her background indelibly. Christmas away from home was simply unthinkable. In the early years Mr. Tilford had dressed as Santa Claus, trumpeting them to breakfast Christmas morning. Joan and Pamela were permitted to tumble down in any old clothes, and usually they didn't dress till immediately before dinner, and since in Tilford tradition presents, usually simple presents, were never given on Christmas Eve, but always on the actual morning, neither ever slept much the night before, and the first hour under the tree, gloating over the spoils, was the best. Mr. Tilford always bought the tree himself, and slipped it into the house when the children were away; then spent long secret hours with Louie

chopping the branches to symmetry and getting the trunk neat and solid in a corner of the big downstairs room, with a wide sheet on the floor to catch the needles.

For a long time the Tilfords were faithful to candles, but now, of course, they used electric lights, and very artful and cunning lights Mr. Tilford had managed to procure. By midnight Christmas Eve in the old days he was ready to put on his coat again and survey his work. Louie would give a final "Z-zz-z" in approval, and Mrs. Pomeroy would clasp her hands in commendation. Then on hands and knees Mr. Tilford set apart one side of the space on the floor for Joan, one for Pamela, and in each space soon a pile of white ribbon-tied boxes rose. Of course there were presents on the tree, too. And they had their stockings at the fireplace, for little things. Then it would be time to peep into the bedroom to see Pamela and Joan there, taut and waiting. "No, children; sleep now, sleep now," he would whisper. And in the morning the shrill trumpet split the house.

Now when they were grown up it was still astonishingly the same, except, of course, they helped to decorate the tree; Pamela had what she called private ornaments, a series of immensely heavy, shining colored balls, which she must always affix herself; and Joan's last job was to climb the stepladder and attach to the topmost sprig a heavy tinsel star. This was going to be a good Christmas this year. She had had a busy week shopping, too, driving each day downtown and assaulting the crowded stores. She was seriously puzzled what to get for her father, and very curious to know what her father had for her. Pamela was desperately anxious for a car of her own. But not till next year, Mr. Tilford said. Meanwhile Joan, struggling through the crowds, selected finally a set of studs and a muffler, a muffler as tall as she and heavy as a

carpet; also of course, as always, she bought an absurd lot of little things, a bar of soap, a tube of the shaving cream he liked, a bag of salted almonds, some flints for his cigarette lighter. Each of these must be packed in enormous, imposing packages. For Pamela she bought a beaded bag, and for Mrs. Pomeroy a shawl. She mustn't forget Sarah and Bessie and Helena; she chose for them carefully in a shop halfway up north on Wilson Avenue. To Louie always she gave a tie. Home again, she felt simple pleasure at these things; the house stood back of its gates like a warmly lit square lantern; every window was a face smiling and beckoning to her.

Still two days remained to Christmas, and in silver snow Christmas was sifting over the city. The trains roared; the wind snapped in from the lake; the stores were impassable; the Loop was an inferno. But everybody was smiling. Even jabbed by an umbrella, stumbling through the yellowing slush, one smiled. Their invitations were ready; so were the presents Mr. Tilford was to deliver to their friends on Christmas morning; a word in each house, then off in the car again, booty being exchanged for booty. She knew in anticipation how she would love Christmas afternoon, and love it now a little sorrowfully. There they would be, all these people whom she had known since childhood: quiet men standing in gray suits who for years, for many blurred years, had watched her grow; aunts and cousins to whom she was attached by a bond both obscure and deep; whom individually she saw hardly once a year, but who, assembled in a group, meant a great deal to her, as part of the background which she knew as home. The afternoons broke up usually around Uncle George, who played the piano magnificently, all of them singing. For at least twelve years she remembered her cousin Mabel sitting in

the same corner, knitting. They all knew themselves so well. They all knew *her* so well! They knew when she had cut her first tooth and that time when, falling from a sleigh, she had skinned her forehead. And she herself—now so infinitely apart! If they could know!

"By the way," Mr. Tilford said, "did you know Hilda Jacobsen is in town—her winter concert here?"

"Oh, is she?"

"Yes."

"I must go and see her."

"By the way, you don't mind? I've asked her to dinner; it's unusual, I know, on Christmas, but I didn't like to think of her alone."

"Why, of course!" Joan said, a little startled.

Next evening was Christmas Eve and they were very gay and Mr. Tilford was solemn and funny and very fine, decorating the big, wave-like tree.

II

It was about time she got rid of these confounded ingrowing reflexes.

For instance, still she had to turn her head away or resolutely hold it straight forward every time she was on a bus-top and the bus passed that street where Philip's flat had been.

And what was worse, she found herself still avoiding a whole group of reviews, and unless she physically forced herself to them, she never read any more the literary pages in newspapers and magazines.

Some day some one would show her the Roosevelt book, or some one would start asking her a lot of silly questions, or she would see the Roosevelt book suddenly in a bookstore.

She avoided that street circuitously and she did not go into bookstores.

III

Miss Jacobsen was wearing a dark silk dress and, regarded when only her head was visible, she was almost indistinguishable from a boy; that is, if one excepted that fine triangle of dark hair pointing downward on her neck. She wore no jewelry. Her lashes when she dropped her lids were fan-shaped. They were not strained a moment at table, even though an outsider at a Tilford Christmas was unprecedented, and before Mr. Tilford had fairly charged with his long knives into the turkey they were all laughing and chattering and saying over and over again what a fine Christmas it was. They each had a cocktail; conversation expanded and seemed to fill the room. Joan had not had a present, naturally, for Miss Jacobsen, and so she took a purple ornament from the tree, a ball wrapped round with tinsel, and pinned it, insisting, on the shoulder of Hilda's dress. Miss Jacobsen was pleased and flushed.

Afterward dozens of their friends came in; a succession of crisp rings on the bell heralded uncles, cousins, aunts, a group of neighbors, some of Mr. Tilford's cronies from his clubs, all his junior partners, then more uncles, cousins, aunts. Joan was quiet after the big dinner and held her wrist up to see again and again the jade bracelet which her father had given her. She was fascinated, too, by another gift, one of those new portable typewriters finished in colors to imitate pebbled leather; Joan's was sky blue, and matched her new telephone. Pamela had given her stockings. "A rather lousy pair. I'm broke," Pamela apologized. The snow lay like a slanting tablecloth down

to the icy lake. The trees outside were dipped in frosting. Sitting quietly, Joan watched her guests, and rising through her mind was a strange confusion of memories. She thought of the pitiless ideal she had held so long for a shadowy standard of conduct; she thought how she had wrecked her life in obeisance to that ideal, and now spitefully had wrecked the ideal, too. And here were all these people; even if she did not love them they meant much to her—and perhaps she did love them. Uncle George was playing carols in the next room, with some people already singing, and a couple of infants, hungrily having brought their new toys with them, circled the floor, bubbling and laughing seriously. Joan watched them; she felt her heart sink. The piano was setting up reverberations in the room and they echoed with accumulated poignance in her heart; she felt she was hearing these old songs played over within her, sometimes an octave higher, sometimes lower than the piano; she was playing them herself in minor tones. She did not belong to these people any more; her heart was away. What a farce it was being quiet and pretending these echoes were real; she was entirely foreign to this group now. But, no, that wasn't correctly put. She felt rather how searchingly, how longingly, she wanted some one else to be here; to smoke a steaming cigar with her father, to get down on hands and knees like Ralph and play with the children, to listen to the carols and be actually an integral part of the warmth and homogeneity from which her emotions rose. Oh well—she blinked. Suppose Christmas always made you sentimental like this.

Mrs. Pomeroy came in, walking slowly but still stately, carrying tall frosted glasses filled with punch. Joan wanted to pull herself away from this cloying mood; she slipped over and sat down beside her aunt. Mrs. Pomeroy

had grown considerably older this past year. Her hair was elegantly coiffed; she still wore impeccably up-to-date clothes; she talked as directly as always. But there was a change. Her cheeks curved in abruptly now, and the skin, a little brownish, hung loose around her lips. She walked not with effort, but as if she feared some one might notice she had to watch carefully the progression of one foot beyond the other. With this physical change Joan noted an intensification of early prejudices, a growing inelasticity of habit, a somewhat resigned sense that in new whims and fads there was little that was really new. Age. Mrs. Pomeroy was getting old. Joan looked at her and was touched. Mrs. Pomeroy listened carefully to what was said, and more and more often her reply was, "Heh? Well, I never!" But still resolutely she tried to keep ahead; still resolutely puzzled over new books, new plays.

"Auntie," Joan suggested, "come to Florida with me—next month maybe."

"Florida? What are you thinking of? I've stood fifty Chicago winters and can stand another. Don't worry about *me*, young leddy." Mrs. Pomeroy paused. "Better watch your father there."

Joan turned casually. Mr. Tilford was at the piano, standing behind Uncle George. He did not sing, but was humming with a prosaic definiteness more clear than some of the voices. Joan watched him, his granite face and the soft eyes; she felt herself acknowledge again the extreme simple pleasure of parental love. Hilda drifted up to the group, a handkerchief gripped between her bony hands. Mr. Tilford smiled to her and with a very light gesture she put her hand on his arm; then she, too, quietly began to hum, and at the end of the song was singing; Mr. Tilford stopped humming to listen to her.

Joan watched—listening to Mrs. Pomeroy the while—casually smiling. A ripple of notes rang down the keys, and Uncle George began "Good King Wensaulus." Well, she had to sing that, too. She walked to the piano and added her shoulders to the group crowding around. Her father didn't seem to notice her. Later Joan drifted back to Mrs. Pomeroy, who, with a swollen wink, pointed to Mr. Tilford and Miss Jacobsen; in perfect good humor and said, "Hmmm—young Mark sparking up—some hanky-panky there!" Joan turned in astonishment, and Mrs. Pomeroy nodded conspiratorally in the manner of the all-wise. Joan watched the group at the piano again, smiling but uncertain; then something began to quiver all over her and her skin tightened and she watched more closely.

IV

A couple of days later, having nursed her emotions carefully, Joan went to Mr. Tilford.

"Dad," she said, "I know. You and Hilda."

He glanced up.

"Why, dad! Why didn't you *tell* me? It's wonderful!"

Good Lord! Everybody lining up, everybody going ——

"Why, *dad!*" she exclaimed again. "I just don't know what to say. I'm *so* surprised!"

"I don't know what to say, either."

"You're in love!"

"Yes."

He was still sitting there.

"It's *fine!*" Joan repeated, bravely. "It's splendid!"

"I think so," he said. "I hope you do, too."

"But why didn't you *tell* me?" She shook her head upward. "But—how stupid I am—imagine it—not guessing!"

"You've been rather preoccupied."

"Dad!" She felt she was flushing. "I simply can't believe it! But—oh—I do approve—she's fine——"

"I would have told you," he put in, "quite soon. I didn't fear telling you. It won't change anything. I know you."

"Of course," Joan nodded.

Good Lord! One by one they all went. Now, of all things, her *father*——

"Splendid," Joan protested again.

"Now you see," he dared a laugh gently, "why your poor father has been such a poor father. Now, my darling, you can understand. There has been so much I have wanted to explain. I have felt such a covert person, Joan."

"Oh, *that's* all right," she brushed him aside.

"I've been in love with Hilda almost two years," her father said, very slowly. "It was very hard at first, not because of you, but because Hilda didn't know you. Hilda felt such an—intruder——"

"Why, nonsense!" Joan scoffed.

It occurred to her her father looked extremely upset. For him this was no joyous felicitation. But he loved Hilda. Joan knew that absolutely. She had watched. Well, then, what was the matter?

"Where's Hilda now?" Joan asked. "I must see her."

"She'll be back in about a month," Mr. Tilford said. "We might go up for a week-end and meet her in Detroit. Perhaps. I'll see."

"I might be in the way." Joan laughed.

"No," Mr. Tilford laughed too.

"When—when are you going to marry?"

They looked at each other. The clock ticked.

"I really don't know," Mr. Tilford finally said, very gravely. "You see, there are certain difficulties. There's her present season to finish, for one thing. And she must make some adjustments in her next year's program. Of course she doesn't give up music. That's understood."

"Are you going to make any announcement—soon?"

"No," he said, guardedly, "I don't think so."

"Well," scoffing, "what's an announcement?"

She kissed him and stepped from the quiet room.

Then the next day she found him almost at the same hour, just before dinner, sitting grave and silent in the library. He looked tired again. He was not gay.

"Look here," Joan said, directly, "I was a pretty bad guesser before. But I think I've guessed something now."

"What is it?"

"Well, father——"

"Guessing's free, Joan."

"I think it's all fine—I do," she retreated.

"What were you going to say?"

"Well, I thought about it—and you and Hilda are living together, aren't you, father?"

"Yes," he said.

"I see."

"That's why I couldn't tell you," he said.

"I see."

"It isn't anything—crass," he explained, slowly. "It's difficult, of course, for me to explain to you. That's why I was sorry you guessed, and why, of course, I had that feeling of covertness I explained. But, Joan, some things

turn out in queer ways. Hilda and I are—are rather fond. I think we will marry. I should not have—have entered this, except that I was sure, I am sure now, that we will marry—some day.”

Mr. Tilford would have liked to explain further. But a definite reserve kept him from discussing these things with his daughter, particularly at this time; and also, perhaps, the fact that not yet did he know perfectly clearly why he and Hilda had—succumbed. What beat him? What made him submit and do what he wanted—live with her? Perhaps it was realization that in Hilda sexual freedom was not an artificial thing, but a reality of nature. In her it was not a cheap intellectualization of passion in the modern mode, it was not insincere or transitory, but the deep, passionate, and essential expression of her real self. That was all.

“What does marriage matter?” Joan shrugged.

“Ah, it matters a good deal,” he immediately said.

“I think I understand, father.”

“Your knowing this may make it hard—no?”

She shook her head.

“You do feel you understand?”

“Sure.”

Her father then was in love with some one and the some one he was in love with wouldn't marry him, and so he just lived with the some one. Sure. She understood. Simple.

He had risen and was standing at the window, not looking at her. He felt her close, however, and because he did not see her face he stretched out his arm gently and touched her shoulder. She went taut and stood silent, trembling so that she could count a successive trembling.

“So you see,” Mr. Tilford said.

Joan repeated, "Sure!"

She watched the snow outside. It fell downward like slow white butterflies in circling flight.

v

A few days later Joan packed two suitcases with enough clothes for some months, a few books, some letters, and a few precious scribbled lines, notes, clippings. She did not take much and the room did not look emptier. She rang a bell. Louie came bowing.

"I'm going away for a while," she said.

"Yessum."

"Please get my car out of the garage, fill it, and take these bags."

"Yessum. Z-zzz-zzz-z!"

She felt very clear in her mind. She smiled coolly and walked into the library. Her father was not there, but she found him in the front room. Many needles had fallen from the Christmas tree. The sheet under the tree was dense and green with dry needles.

"Hello, dad!" she said. "Did you have to go to court? How did that newspaper suit turn out?"

"We won," he said, briefly. "I've just got in."

"I know," she said. "I was waiting."

She told him she was going. He did not say anything for several moments and then protested.

She brushed his words away explaining:

"No, please don't misunderstand. I've wanted to go for some time. But I needed some sort of spur to move me. I do love this house so. And, Lord! what's there to worry about? You *wanted* me to go six months ago, and, really, it's just the same now. Oh, dad, I can take

care of myself. Yes, certainly you and Hilda have something to do with it. But please, *do* be fair and understand. I couldn't bear it if I thought I were badly hurting you. Please, father. If I thought I was hurting you and Hilda I wouldn't go. And I do want to go—so much. I don't want to hurt your happiness. It's simply that I want a new sort of happiness of my own. Philip? No, father, I'm not going to Philip. I'm glad you mentioned that. Do you know, that's the first time we've mentioned Philip in three months? Well! But about you and Hilda, it's not what I'm afraid you think—I'm not going because of any sense of outrage—oh no! Please believe that. I *don't* want to hurt you and Hilda. I couldn't bear it if I did. It isn't any feeling of outrage at all—in fact—it's quite the opposite. I'll explain some day. I'm just going away on—on a holiday. A month or two."

She stopped.

He didn't look at her for a moment.

"Where are you going?"

"I'll write you later."

"Do you know?"

"Yes."

"You have plenty of money?"

"Oh, *sure*, father." She stopped. "Is it all clear?"

"Yes, I understand. I shall miss you."

"I love you, father."

He nodded and seemed heartbroken.

"But, Gee!" Joan protested. "There's no use fussing about this or pretending it's anything. I'm simply going away for a while. Like at school. Or Europe. You wanted me to go in spring. And I'll be right here, in Chicago. Now—please!" She paused.

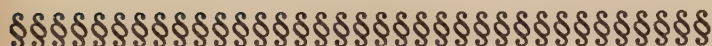
"Well, good-by."

She closed the door carefully, lips tight.

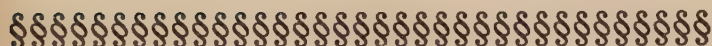
VI

She rang the door bell.

This time she had telephoned.



Chapter Three



I

JOAN liked the house, but she knew she could not possibly stay very long; her own bedroom was mild enough—one of the back rooms which had escaped Macmillan's decorative zeal; but the rest, so far as any indefinite tenure was concerned, was a little too grotesque. One simply could not go on day after day cooking eggs in a kitchen the ceiling of which was a star-spangled blue, or read, or try to read, in the black room fitted with the Fiji maidens. No! How Macmillan managed to live in it was beyond her. She saw finally what she had not seen the night of the party, the big bedroom and the bath; the bedroom was not violent, being painted only a cozy cinnamon, with deep blue hangings, and the bathroom in fact was great fun: around the walls were painted a succession of the animals entering Noah's ark, all of them exaggeratedly picturesque and colorful, and with quite necessary identification tags attached; there were silver stars around the ceiling and along the pipes, and in the corner above the washstand a huge, fierce Jove scrutinized the approaching animals with great red eyes and flaming beard. Yes, for any length of time, it was an impossible house. But for a month or so, feeling free and relaxed and rather silly this way, it was just the thing.

The first evening Macmillan had been understanding itself. She felt a little scared entering.

"This is quite amazing," Macmillan said. "Did I hear you right over the phone?"

"I'm here," Joan said, briefly.

"Why?"

"I don't know."

"Well, I'm glad to have you."

"And," she inquired, delicately, "it's all right, what I said?"

"You'd better say it again."

He was looking at her with a sort of mocking, appreciative incredulity.

"Well, I said I wanted to live with you but not *with* you."

That was her idea. She wanted to stay in the house a month or so, but not as his mistress. Over the phone he had been considerably surprised. But he agreed at once. And now he said, "All right, it's understood." Still mocking and curious, he watched her. "But I'd like to know what it's all for. You're just crazy, are you?"

"Sure," Joan agreed.

Then, laughing, he showed her to a room and asked if he must say good-night at once. She said no, laughing. They sat on the bed and laughed, and then he lugged in her bags and she unpacked.

It was not as good a room as her room at home, but it was big enough and the lighting was admirable. The garden was just outside, but for the first few days, passionately, she did miss the lake; still, what did it matter, the lake was ice-covered anyway. She insisted on paying board and rent. He agreed.

There was really an immense amount to do in the house. First of all, gluttonously she surveyed the fortification of

green steel filing cases, and found within them, all in neat indexed folders and envelopes, a startling miscellany of interesting clippings—interesting to her. He clipped assiduously from fifty-odd magazines, and often tore apart books containing scattered material, so as to file together material which belonged together; then often newer books embodied these same things, and, if arrangement by volume was better than that in the filing cases, out the clippings went; to make room soon enough, Heaven knew, for more. There were a poetry section, where hundreds of fugitive verses lay sleeping; a section of essays; rank on rank of plays, stories, sketches; innumerable prints and woodblocks in the bigger cases underneath; many photographs in the lowest drawers: all of these things overshadowed, of course, by the main files which dealt with architecture—ornament, design, perspective, photograph, letter-press. He had his own work rather carelessly indexed, but he preserved and classified carefully every scrap of matter he could find on other architects. He did not have much material on classical architecture; that was all in his head, he said. She discovered, too, he had a vast book-plate collection, but it did not interest her: book-plates, except when rarely they were works of art, seemed dull. Reading through the big indexes, poring through the catalogues, she found many bibliographical and artistic curiosities, which, when she asked him about them, invariably led him to dig out some further similar work, some associated oddment or interesting rarity. Of course, too, there were the etchings on the walls to study. And the maps. And—Heavens!—the books! Letters were the only things, apparently, which he never saved. Why? “Stupid question, Joan.” She looked interrogative and he looked contemptuous. “Every

lady I know would be compromised." "Except me," Joan said.

She did not see him often the first weeks. Several evenings each week he was busy at professional meetings, or club meetings, and of course during the day he was away at his office. He did not have a car and often walked downtown. Sometimes when he was home in the evening he read, occasionally aloud; more often, however, he was off alone in his study and she didn't see him. He always came into the house somberly and always rediscovered her with a curious upward smile.

"Who in thunder is this girl in my house?" he seemed to say. She noticed he had acute fits of depression after sustained bouts of energy; once, happening in the library, she found him crying. He had been reading some poem. Electrically he whirled her out. He was very secretive, and she thought also he was sly; and obviously she puzzled him by her extreme frankness. It was hard to realize he was older than her father. She wondered about his youth and career, and why, apparently, he had never married; but he volunteered nothing. Once she asked him about marriage. "I've been married three times—oh yes," he said. He did not go into detail.

"You've been lazy long enough," he announced one night. "Now you work. Maybe you have brains and we'll see."

Her first stipulated duty was the filing case; although, he said, he didn't permit his ordinary secretaries to touch it. They were, by the way, not much puzzled by her, nor were the servants; Joan was a little embarrassed at this inattention. The filing case was in arrears and she got the indexing up to date, working out a system for cross-checking the photographs which he approved. He was a fiend for particularity; every card had to be thus-and-so,

every letter printed meticulously. She tackled the bookplate collection next, and rearranged it alphabetically.

"But," Joan complained, "this isn't work."

"You might tackle the theater downstairs."

But she was a poor carpenter and had to give the theater up. Meanwhile there was a good deal of clerical work to do; she clipped the magazines, ordered his books, and fought two hours, if necessary, to make new books balance on the shelves.

"You might try finishing this map," he said.

Joan had never painted on parchment before and it was trying work.

"If you spill any paint on that, I'll beat you."

There was a queer slanted look in his face; she thought quite possibly he meant it. Well, he would have a fight. She started dabbling with his architecture file, and he was furious when she threw out a pile of duplicates. "But you had two copies," she protested. He did not speak to her for two days. Of course mounting photographs and reclassifying the indexes and copying out scribbled memoranda were very dull. It was more fun to sketch on the new panels he was designing and help fill in the color.

"You're deft," he said. "If you had any training I'd make something out of you."

So for a month Joan lived. She hardly left the house. She wrote to her father, not explaining, however, exactly where she was or what she was doing; later she called him up and they talked a few moments over the telephone.

"You might come up Sunday for dinner," Mr. Tilford suggested.

"No, I have a date," Joan begged off. When she did leave the house, it was with caution, almost as if she feared to be seen; she was living in retreat—and in what a nunnery! Macmillan had several small parties while she

was there. She met several friends and she knew what they would think, and doubtless how they would talk, when, leaving at the end of the evening, they saw that she stayed; and in fact framed with Macmillan in the doorway, waved in farewell, the hostess; certainly she was ticketed already. She shrugged. The only really difficult thing was that she was being unfair to Macmillan. He waved her aside when, on this account, she offered, one remorseful evening, to go.

"Nonsense!" he said. "Consideration is not an emotion which I recognize."

"I apologize," Joan said.

"I never apologize," he said.

II

"I want a job," she declared, one evening.

They were sitting over dinner, and Macmillan was about to leave for a neighborhood theater in which he was playing a rôle. He was already in costume, as a peasant. Joan had the new magazines from London to read.

"Yes, after all, I'm not really working here. I'd like a real job. Do you suppose if you hear of something ——?"

"I'll see."

A few days later he telephoned from the office and asked her to meet him in the Fine Arts Building. She scurried downtown.

"This is Mr. Fitzhumber," Macmillan introduced them.

"How do you do?"

"Will you give this lady the job?" Macmillan asked.

"Let me see your hands."

Joan showed her hands.

"You may get a little stained."

"That's all right."

"Look at that wall. What color picture should hang on it?"

"Gray," she suggested, "with green in it."

"Walk over to that corner, return here, turn a circle, then sit down in this chair."

She walked, returned, circled, and sat.

"Do you have intuitions?"

"No; but darned good hunches sometimes."

"You'll do," Fitzhumber said. "Thirty-five dollars a week. Be here at nine tomorrow."

III

Fitzhumber was a famous photographer who was also a consulting expert in interior decoration. He was a very short, fat little man; in profile he looked like a cube stood on end, twirling. When annoyed he had a curious mannerism—his small mouth twisted up and turned almost vertical. His fat, she learned to appreciate, was part of his charm, like his smile, and was actually attractive: he was the sort of fat man who would look delightful in a bathing-suit. Joan never knew whether his ridiculous name was a pseudonym or not. His photography was, of course, his business and his art; the decoration business had come into being quite by chance. He was friendly with his sitters and usually, when he liked them, asked them to stay between appointments and made them tea over a little electric stove; for special friends he arranged appointments very late in the afternoon, so that they could sit and talk indefinitely. Casually he gave advice about photographs and pictures; a North Shore lady asking him to dinner two summers before had taken occasion to invite his attention to her various furnishings, especially

her rugs. Fitzhumber was an amateur of rugs. He arrived at his studio the next morning with an idea. He did not change his name plate nor his stationery. But he bought a few old chairs, a yard or so of tapestry, a porcelain jug, some knickknacks in brass, and some rugs—one big Shiraz, a tiny Koula, a silk prayer rug, a rare, rose-colored Sennah. At least he said that he picked them up casually; actually a fortnight of arduous and discriminating search had barely sufficed to bring him what he wanted.

"Like this?" he said to a fashionable sitter shortly, pointing to a rug.

"I adore it—but surely this is a museum piece. Isn't it Tabriz?"

"I should say it is," Fitzhumber replied.

"I'd give my eye for it. I *adore* it!"

"Well," and Fitzhumber laughed, "you needn't. It's for sale." Then slowly he let it be known among his friends that not only did he occasionally have a few rare pieces for sale, but that for a consideration, a friendly and humane consideration, he was willing sometimes, in his spare time, to appraise their houses, to suggest their fittings, to outline new decoration. Do the decorating himself? Of course not! He was a photographer! But for the love of the thing—he would suggest. In a few months, already probably one of the first half-dozen of American photographers, Fitzhumber had become so outrageously fashionable in his new avocation that he scarcely had time to take pictures. He felt a cheat. His taste was impeccable, but he was no expert. And he loved photography austere, and photography he felt he was betraying.

Puffing at a cigarette, he explained these matters to Joan.

"And what am I for?" she asked.

"You're atmosphere," he said.

IV

It was too much trouble to park the car downtown; she took the L each morning and learned all about hanging on straps. She was dead tired each evening, having been on her feet all day: and back at Macmillan's she would eat dinner sleepily, read or talk with him, then go to bed, dead. And what an effort it was to be up at 7:30 the next day. Seven-thirty! For the first time in her life she felt productive.

The economics of all this was interesting. Since she had left home she had not touched her allowance: she telephoned Mr. Powell at the bank and let it accumulate. This was possible because she had saved a good deal during the autumn, and even after buying Christmas presents had had two or three hundred dollars remaining in her pocket the evening she left home. And of course, because Macmillan was as stubborn as she, refusing to accept from her for rent anything but a sum so nominal as to be ridiculous, she had not been pressed for money. What was more, having her clothes, she need not be pressed for some time. Still, it was rather a shock to discover what books cost when she paid for them, and how much shopping at Field's amounted to without her charge account, and what an appalling amount of gasoline the car consumed week by week. Well now, henceforth she had thirty-five dollars a week—earned. Earned! This was quite incredible. It overwhelmed her.

Macmillan was a little contemptuous and mildly amused.

"I'd like to see you really on your own. You wouldn't last ten minutes."

"Wouldn't I, though?"

But he was great fun in the evenings, taunting her about work; and without ever saying a word, giving her always the impression he knew positively that she would, of her own initiative, change the manner of their relations some day; it was obvious he would never move first. Joan shrugged; she paid no attention to his silent game; she was not interested. He must seriously lack any real understanding of people, since he was so mistaken about her. Obviously, he would not believe that she had not the faintest intimate interest in him. Conceited animal! He was restless these days. He must be a little mad. Also he was very busy getting a paper ready for a professional association.

"I'd like to give them that old ecstasy piece," he said, "but it's not for architects; they understand nothing but wind-surface on concrete."

"I'll write you a fine speech," Joan replied, "on the difference between T'ang and Ming."

She did not miss home much, any more, which was amazing enough. She telephoned her father once a week, and had tea once with a wide-eyed, curious Pamela; but she had not seen the house itself, and had to call herself a hypocrite whenever she tried, in occasional darker moods, to lament all those things she had lost. Bosh! Still—she mustn't exaggerate—she had lost a good deal; and she knew in her secret heart she could not be so buoyant by half if she did not have, deep in that same heart, knowledge that some day she would return. This was all a respite. She was in transition. Toward what?

"I dare say I know," she would murmur.

As to what was behind and all that had caused this change she knew she was herself unchanged; she was cold and black.

V

Macmillan only talked about Philip once.

"You're going at it wrong, I think. Don't hold something in you and fight this way—no. Some day it will come out far stronger; you'll go to pot. Don't fight. Forget it."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean about staying in love with a ghost."

She felt herself stiffen.

She did not want to talk about Philip, and yet she could find nothing else to talk about; she sat silent and choked, Macmillan, silent too, watching her.

He did not mention Philip again.

VI

Fitzhumber introduced her to his cameras. He had them all named. The biggest one was Ajax and the little hidden fellow in the next room with which Miller, his assistant, sometimes took unobserved pictures of people Fitzhumber was posing, was called the Fox. There were others, and Fitzhumber took care of them like a dog her puppies. He was, Joan found, full of tricks. He made a great ceremony of putting butter on a sitter's face; and when actresses came over to be photographed, scantily clothed, he was very solemn with them, winking at Joan the while. She couldn't tell what was ridiculous byplay to hoodwink his sitters and impress them, and what in the hocus-pocus he himself had come to believe in. She enjoyed telling charming matrons that they must wait half an hour; Mr. Fitzhumber was exhausted by the sitting just before, and was lying resting. "Oh yes, he gets very

tired; his work takes so much out of him, you know." There was no doubt this fat, funny, rather irritable genius was a great showman; but an artist, too. Even as an artist he was full of tricks. He had a double release-cord on Ajax which clicked twice, first very loudly, hearing the click, the sitter would relax, whereupon, pressing the silent release-cord which really exposed the plate, Fitzhumber, winking preposterously, took the picture. He did all of his own developing and printing, of course; but after a few weeks let Joan cautiously experiment with a few negatives. He was wonderful with brush and scalpel in the darkroom. It pleased her that after a week or two he assumed naturally that she knew everything about photography that he knew, rebuking her with his mouth vertical when she did things wrong. At that, of course, she was supposed to have little to do with the photography end of it. She was learning to run the decoration department. That was really the job.

"Get out of here. What are you doing here?"

"I want to watch."

"Darkroom's too small. Get out."

"Look."

Joan showed her hands.

There were some very nice stains on them already.

VII

Macmillan picked her up at the studio one evening; he was on the way home from his weekly five-o'clock class at the Art Institute. He was giving a course of interpretive lectures on Cram, Goodhue, Howell, Sullivan, and other American architects. Louie Sullivan, once his closest friend, was still his god. He pursued Sullivan

castings and cornice-heads like an entomologist after a rare swallow-tail.

"Come on," he said to Fitzhumber and Joan. "Dinner."

She was finishing one of her odd chores, listing the appointments for the next day, and this week she must get the bills out. Two hundred dollars per dozen for the medium-size pictures did seem rather high.

"Food!" exclaimed Fitzhumber. "Ah!"

He was a monumental eater at dinner, but ate nothing during the day. When he was busy he expected Joan to do without luncheon also.

"I think this should be my party," Joan suggested.

They both agreed.

They walked first to Henrici's, but found it too crowded; then Fitzhumber suggested an Alsatian restaurant near Lake Street. Winter was thawing and slush and mud were inches deep on the streets; they padded through the swirling muck, Fitzhumber surprisingly the most agile of the three. At the restaurant Joan solemnly ordered.

"You know," she said later, "I owe you two an awful lot. You most," she nodded to Macmillan.

"This is unfair discrimination," announced Fitzhumber.

"You mustn't think—just because I've said so little—that I'm not grateful."

"Forget it," Macmillan said, wearily.

"You earn your pay; that's enough," Fitzhumber blared.

"I doubt it." She had to laugh.

She was very pleased, out this way with both of them, that they treated her quite as a man and even as a contemporary; they were polite, in an absent sort of way, but not too polite, and she felt one of them. Still, there was an interesting difference in attitude between Macmillan

and Fitzhumber. She sometimes saw Macmillan watching her. Fitzhumber never did.

"Let's go to this new movie," Macmillan said. He indicated one of the vast new cinema palaces across the street. "I hear the gentleman's lavatory is pure Etruscan and a positive dream."

Joan paid the bill and they crossed the street. Fitzhumber, however, would not enter, after one look at the purple-liveried, gold-studded page boys, and the powdered girl who stood like a statue, turning on a pedestal with spot lights in seven colors alternating to emblazon her.

"I'm going back to the studio," Fitzhumber said. "There's that batch of prints to retouch."

"I'll go with you," Joan volunteered at once. "I didn't quite finish ticketing the new rugs."

Macmillan nodded and went on into the theater alone. He was very fond of movies.

"Look here," Fitzhumber asked her. "Are you living with him?"

Joan didn't say anything. She didn't want to make Macmillan look a fool. "My child, I'm thirty years older than you," Fitzhumber said. "Spit it out."

"So's Macmillan," she said. "But no, I'm not living with him."

Fitzhumber nodded just perceptibly.

VIII

She and Macmillan were tired, at lag-end one night; he didn't want to work, she didn't want to read, neither of them wanted to turn in at 9:30 o'clock. Joan suggested a bus ride and they drove up to Devon. She had given up her car as an unnecessary luxury these days; telephoned

Louie to take it away and let Pamela drive it if she promised not to take the corners faster than thirty miles an hour. She missed the car intensely. Soon it would be March; there was a blustering, uneasy softness in the air. Since she met Philip almost a year now.

At Devon they took another bus to Howard; Joan took off her hat and leaned back so that she could mould her hard round throat with her hands. On the way back, at Wilson, where they should have changed, she said:

"I don't want to go home."

He nodded.

"Yes I do, after all," she changed her mind.

They got off the bus, Macmillan following her dutifully.

"Let's walk," Joan suggested.

Slowly, almost broodingly, they walked all the way to Lincoln Park. She put her hand under his arm at the street corners. He was very silent and detached.

"Let's take another bus," she said at the park.

Sometimes that darkness disappeared; but when it was gone she felt no difference. The active oppression was over now, but instead only a blankness had come; and wasn't that worse? What was she doing, drifting? No, she had come away, she was trying to earn a living, to live by herself, in some remote, secret, obscure way to prove herself. What was it all about? Where was she going?

"What do I mean, prove myself?" she said aloud.

"I'm sure I don't know."

"I'm in such a state," she confessed.

"You don't talk about it much."

"Naturally."

"I think you're just mad, like me," he said.

"You're the sanest person I know."

At Wilson they changed again and took another bus

westward toward his house. He looked at her once under the wash of an arc-lamp and was smiling. There was friendliness in the smile and no hint of the taunt that was often in his eyes. There was a telephone message waiting for her from Fitzhumber—he wanted her at 7:30 tomorrow morning. They were going to Lake Forest together to see a house. Macmillan tossed off his coat, laughing.

"Spring," he said.

There were some books just arrived, and Joan unpacked them. One was a new sheaf of verse and he turned the pages, reading one or two things aloud.

"Hello! this is nice!" He read others, and with her coat still on, unbuttoned, hanging, she listened; as always he read extremely well, and as when he talked in public, always half smiling.

"Oh, good! Please, some more."

One of the verses reminded him of another volume; he picked it up and before midnight there were half a dozen books open on the table.

"I think I'll turn in," she yawned.

"Good night."

She was ready for bed, and then suddenly there he was on the threshold.

He did not say anything, but the question in his eyes spoke and a little frightened her.

Why not?

She stiffened.

After all—why not?

He was old.

"I want you," he said.

Why not?

She whispered, "All right."

IX

Late the next day, home from Lake Forest, she sighed and didn't honestly know what to do.

It was *so* silly—yes ——

But she felt it was essential. She felt she was being pursued, that always when this came into her life, then she must escape, she must get away, move on.

It was silly. She did like the house.

But—yes.

She scribbled a note which she stuck on the center table. He would not understand. Neither did she. But she had to go. There was no alternative. She packed, very hurriedly. She called a taxi. She went.



Chapter Four



I

HER first business was to find a flat. She stayed a few days in a small hotel near Webster, a hotel only a few yards from her old school, Harper; from her windows she saw the girls play hockey, later leaving the brown-gabled building, books under arms, arms swinging. She was not quite sure how much she could afford for rent, but everything she looked at the first few days was far too dear; in despair she resigned herself to a room or two somewhere, probably down by the river.

"You're late," Fitzhumber snapped one morning.

"I've been house-hunting."

"I can't help that, you're due here at nine."

That was a nuisance, not having time of her own; so far, working at the studio, there had been nothing else she wanted to do during the day; now it was a shock to know that her time very emphatically was not her own, and that any house-hunting, shopping, or hellos for friends had to come between half past twelve and two each day or on Saturday afternoons. Saturday afternoons were very short. It took her a fortnight to find a flat. Her hotel bill for thirteen days was \$89.72. She had about \$200 of her old, saved-up allowance still left.

The flat was not much. Joan moved her things, dumped them on the floor, and sat. Sitting disconsolate, her shoulders hunched up, she let her fists rub up against her cheeks. She sat a long time and saw red spots on her cheeks when she got up. "I've got to see this thing through," she muttered. Why? What was this inner necessity driving her to herself?

The two rooms which composed her flat were stuck like partitions of a shelf on the second story of an old building between the river and Rush Street. She did not like the rooms, but the location was perfect; she could walk to work, and during the early morning, shadows from the big tower buildings fell across her walls; hour by hour the sirens moaned and boats bumped through the bridges, up the river. There were about forty box-like rooms in the building, which, like a filing case, was designed to waste as little space as possible; the walls were thin and she could hear the people next door. There was no carpet on the stairs. Her first room was the bigger of the two; shaped like an L, it was both a hall, and behind a screen, a bedroom; the other room, the kitchen, was small and dark. She had no use for the kitchen except for coffee in the morning, and she could make a little library out of it easily. The furniture was—Joan sighed. The bed was of black-painted iron. Well, she could change that. The wall-paper was a brilliant pink dotted with obscene green flowers; that she couldn't change.

But in a week the rooms were almost unrecognizable. After a tussle with herself, she decided there really was no reason why she shouldn't bring down some of her own furniture. She waited till Sunday, drove north, and said a cheery hello to Louie and Sarah; dropped into the

kitchen and told Bessie she was staying for lunch; then went upstairs and decided what of her pictures, her books, her rugs, her curtains, her furniture she would move. Why not? The things were hers. Louie moved everything possible into the car, drove south, and returned for a second load. With all these things the flat would be fairly habitable. Except maybe for that queer, compressed, aging smell she felt entering each night. She would make a go of it! She *would*! Bessie cooked a triumphant Sunday dinner; sighing, Joan demolished the last of her last artichoke. Mr. Tilford was away in California, and Pamela off week-ending; but in the afternoon, after prodding through the garden and then at dusk curling in the one big chair left in her room, watching the water for an hour, dreaming, she had a good talk with Mrs. Pomeroy; and it was an effort, after tea, not to stay to supper, too. But no. She saw the last cargo of her things safely in the car, and got in front with Louie.

"Then all this is permanent," Mrs. Pomeroy, who was crying, asked her.

"Of course not," scoffed Joan.

"When are you coming back?"

"I don't know," she had to say.

She reached the flat. It was coldish and, after her house, pretty dim. She did not sit this time; her lips almost disappeared with determination and she set about arranging her things. It took almost till midnight; then, dead tired, she was hungry, and found nothing but a couple of eggs in the kitchen. Not even bread. What a careless fool she was. She ate the eggs. Then, smiling a little, she looked at her flat—and was amazed. It *was* livable! The two lacquer screens she brought covered sink and stove in the kitchen, and really the cupboard

made a quite decent bookcase. Her books shone friendlily along the improvised shelves, big fat books in buckram, little books in mauve, yellow, orange paper covers; she must have brought over a hundred. Then the new table was handy in the corner, and the lamp made it cozy; thank Heaven there was a plug near enough. And the big room was quite splendid. Most of the wall-paper she managed to cover with silks she stole from Pamela's room (although, subject of a long quarrel, they were not Pamela's, they were hers); her prints did for the rest. If only she had a new bed. Well, she couldn't have everything. She felt like a savage, kicking to one side the mat carpet that had covered the floor; now she had her own big lovely pink-and-yellow Kermanshah. Why! She burst into helpless laughter. And she had her chairs. She turned around idly, rather helplessly, as if looking for some one. Pity there was no one to talk to. Well, it was very late. She went to bed.

Now, economics was a serious thing. There was no use saving capital; if she spent ten dollars of it each week, it would last twenty weeks, five months; and she didn't expect to be doing *this* for five months. No indeed! Well, that gave her, with her salary, just forty-five dollars a week; and over that she would not spend a cent. She swore it. She swore it intensely and passionately, and swore it over again at the end of each of the first three weeks when the oath was broken. How *did* people live? Her rent was fifty dollars a month. Not bad. What happened to the rest? Heaven only knew! She cooked her own breakfast, and cursed having to do it; had lunch usually at one of the little shops along the Boulevard; for dinner, several times a week, anyway, there were people taking her out. But the first week she spent her

forty-five dollars in three days and had to borrow five dollars from Fitzhumber; the next week the forty-five had gone with still two days to go; she swore, took her capital to a bank, deposited it beyond reach, and arranged to draw just ten dollars every Saturday morning. The next week she decided she wouldn't eat. She didn't—for a day. Damn! Saturday, pay day, came, and she had fourteen cents left. That was rather a ridiculous sum, fourteen cents. She thought rather ruefully, here she was walking down Michigan Boulevard smart and fresh, in a coat which must have cost \$2,000, in shoes which she remembered, in November, having paid thirty-seven dollars and fifty cents for. People looked at her. She looked prosperous. She could see other women measuring her. And she had fourteen cents. "What an ass I am!" she thought.

The next week she managed just to hold out, and felt she was learning things. But, bosh! really she was learning nothing, and any time lingering self-pity made her think she was having a hard time, that was bosh again, criminal bosh. Was she earning her living? No. Well, in a way, actually she was. Just the same, it was lucky Corcoran was coming around to take her to dinner Friday night. It was fine when people took her out to dinner Friday night. But she was just a fool, an idiot. How could she hope to come out straight, buying those stockings when really she could have bought a much cheaper pair; and after all she didn't need to *buy* books and magazines—she could read them in libraries. "But I never will," she thought, scorning herself. A couple of days later she began to feel very lonely and blue. There was nothing to do in the flat and she was tired of reading; there were no interesting movies and she didn't want to go to the theater unless she had good seats, and these

she couldn't afford; she took a long walk and wondered what tomorrow would be like. She hiked north along the lake, sprinting backward when the big waves dashed spluttering over the breakwater. Back home, she sat down dutifully, lips pursed and pencil rubbing her chin, to write some overdue letters; she gave up halfway through the second. There ought to be some one to talk to. "This is all really great fun," she thought, getting into bed. She thought it, however, somewhat skeptically.

II

She had had no idea posing for an hour could be such hard work. All she had to do was sit at a sunlit table on which knives and forks cut a silvery pattern, and hold just to her lips a very lovely, fragile silver glass.

"Fine!" exclaimed Fitzhumber in the darkroom. "Come and look!"

"That's good," Joan said.

"Fine!" he repeated. "Hereafter we have no more god-damned models!"

The model the agency sent him had been heavy-eyed and awkward. After posing her once, Fitzhumber threw her out enraged. He bellowed, thrusting up his short arms; then Joan had walked in from the outer room and Fitzhumber jumped and seized her.

He often did commercial work—that is, advertising photographs, of silver and linens, cut-glass sometimes and jewelry, furs and costumes. He had no false snobbery about this, and rebuked Joan when she first scorned it; he said sunlight on glass was just as beautiful artistically as a pretty girl, and a damned sight harder to photograph.

"Hm! Now I've got both!" he snapped at her.

III

It was 8:45 and she had a few moments for the *Tribune* while the coffee was cooling.

Mr. Mark Tilford of 8000 Lake Shore Drive announces the engagement of his daughter Pamela to Mr. Ralph Mountjoy Palmer, Jr., son of Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Mountjoy Palmer of the Parkdale Hotel. The marriage will take place in June.

There was a good picture of Pamela in the paper and a small oval cut in the column for Ralph.

Pamela and Ralph. Everyone *was* going. Well!

IV

Fitzhumber paid her extra when she posed for him, the regular model's rate; she did not, however, pose very often. After all, she was there to learn the decoration business. She said frankly after another month that really she wasn't worth her keep; in any matter of judgment, however small, when it came to actual furnishing, she had to go to Fitzhumber; she knew nothing and it was her chief grace that she hadn't, so far, pretended to know more. Fitzhumber said she was doing exactly what he wanted her to do. She did the routine work which had been eating into his time disastrously. She took care of minor matters and cleared the ground for him. Of course she didn't know furniture, or tapestry, or china. *He* didn't know them. To know them took forty years. But she was learning a little and soon would know almost as much as he. Meanwhile he would do the actual buying, designing, and then selling again; in a year she

could take all of it on, except perhaps to call in his advice at beginning and end; and then he would be free again, almost entirely free, for Ajax and the Fox. As it was—look at her!—she had done practically the entire Culbertson job herself.

"Oh no," she said.

"Yes," he insisted.

"I don't think so," Joan, who was in depressed, humble mood, said again.

Fitzhumber snorted, "You're not paid to think."

Photography was a pretty interesting thing. She liked to watch Fitzhumber at Ajax much more than deciding whether to suggest Oushaks as against Sarouks for a drawing-room. He didn't let her touch his cameras, and scoffed at her interest, saying it couldn't be real, that she was trying to cajole or jolly him. He was doing a series of interiors for the house organ of a great department store; Joan was in half a dozen of the pictures, doing everything from sitting at table over shining china to wearing bracelets and necklaces with the high blue light playing over her while Fitzhumber posed, focused, worked. "Hello! I have an idea. Wait a moment." He held her in the pose, but shifted the camera slightly. A couple of days later he worked almost four hours without a break in the darkroom. "Hello! Here's a present for you." It was a lovely portrait. He had caught and transfixed somehow an avid poignance in her face; the shallows in her throat shone with a texture which suggested inimitably the actual sweep and molding of the flesh; her mouth, caught in half-profile, was slightly smiling, and the eyes, even in the photograph, were half moist, almost blue.

"It's not me," Joan said. "Oh no; I'm not so good."

"It's yours," Fitzhumber said, "but first we'll make it work." He put it in the oval silver frame, the place of honor, in the Boulevard show-window. It stayed there ten days. Several people came up and asked for photographs "like that one downstairs."

"No, impossible," Fitzhumber would say. "To take a picture like that you gotta have a face like that."

Joan would sink a little in her corner.

"No, I'm not being rude," Fitzhumber rushed after his prey. "Yours is a different type of face. You need a different type of picture. I could give you an appointment next Thursday at ten."

But most of the time he was egging her to rugs and furniture. He hired an expert to give them lessons, and they listened meekly at the weekly two-hour talk. The expert was a young gray-haired man named Markil, actually with his face glazed and jointed like the pieces he so carefully depicted. Joan did her best to be interested. After one lecture she said nothing, but had made up her mind; she thought, grimly, "I'm hanged if I end up by turning into a furniture salesman." But after that she knew she would not keep up work with Fitzhumber much longer, however much she did like him. It was interesting to be with him, and valuable in a way; but as an eventuality photography had nothing for her. Lord, no! But she didn't want to forget how she liked him and how immensely grateful she was for the chance he gave her to stand alone these short, transitory months.

She thought it over carefully and decided that in any case within a year she would travel. At present she felt she could not bear to travel alone; she felt she had no independence of energy. But that mood was going, it was—thank God!—almost gone. In a year she would be well

again. Now, if she did drop the studio, what was there to do? She wanted something that she liked and that would be hard work, and of course it must earn her a living. Especially she wanted something she could do herself; she wanted to see herself quite on her own feet, her own authority, her own responsibility. To do something alone, she would need capital. Well, that was all right. She had capital.

But what to do?

She *must* think it out.

v

How queer it was, looking at a word long enough so that it became unintelligible.

You could take any common little word like "match" or "pencil" or "France" and if you just looked at it and kept it flat in front of your brain even for a few minutes intensively, then it disassociated itself into a queerly stratified group of letters and became meaningless; and soon even the separate letters became meaningless too, so that it did not exist as a word any more, so that when you said it aloud it was not a word.

Yes, take "notebook" for instance, or "arduous," or "Puritan."

Pity you couldn't take *images* out of you that way—break them up—make them meaningless—make them disappear.

vi

There were times when buoyancy went out of her like air fizzing from a balloon, and then everything—even

after a great party like that one the night before—became flat and gray again.

"Now what on earth has happened?" Fitzhumber demanded.

Joan was sitting under the blue light, wearing stockings he wanted to photograph, and shoes with silver buckles twinkling at the toe.

"Wake up!"

"Nothing's wrong," she protested.

"I can see it in your feet."

"Nonsense!" She laughed.

She did not laugh well and he looked at her in disgust.

"You are quite remarkable," he said.

"I can't help it."

"You get blue suddenly, and, my God! it shows in your very feet."

"Oh, forget it," Joan said.

He walked around the room. His mouth was vertical.

"Now—try again."

She sat.

"It's no good." He threw up his arms. "We'll wait till tomorrow."

"This is absurd," she protested. "You're photographing my feet, not me."

He decided to try again.

"Try to laugh," he commanded, hidden in the cloth behind the camera. "Now," he cautioned.

She was shaking with laughter.

"Heavens! Feet!"

He finished the picture.

"There is something damn funny in you," he said.

Joan was in tears all of a sudden.

"I'm not at all sure I like you," he said. He left the

room with his arms up helplessly. He did not try to comfort her.

VII

Economics. Economics was still just about the most interesting thing in the world.

She was quite reconciled to the flat now, except, having a place really her own for the first time, it was an abysmal nuisance not to be able to buy things she saw and coveted. It was the devil, being in the decoration business with about two dollars a week to spend for things of her own. But it was quite obvious now that if she bought stockings at four dollars and fifty cents a pair instead of three dollars and fifty cents there would be a dollar less on Saturday. Obvious. But how extraordinarily hard to act upon! She looked back with horror to the old days when she had spent more or less what she liked. What a filthy thing it was, having to rent books from a library instead of buying them. And being unable to order any new spring clothes was rather trying. But—hold on!—here she was, being a self-pitying fool again, a ninny, an absurd spoiled baby, imagining that she was really suffering, *daring* to think she had done anything in which there was any iota of hardship or sacrifice. Instead she was having a darned *easy* time of it. Yes. Only she was a darned fool.

Every Saturday it was the same now. She just managed to scrape the week through.

"If I saved three dollars and fifty cents a week for the next two months I could buy that coat," she thought.

The coat was not worth it. By that time she'd want another coat. Thinking of coats, sometimes her allowance did dangerously beckon.

"I could keep this up forever and never save a cent," she thought.

Usually on Fridays she didn't eat.

VIII

Fitzhumber was working late over a set of children's portraits; they were in color, on pan-chromatic film, and there was some anxious and delicate developing to do. She watched him and felt like a nurse handing instruments to a surgeon. It was late, but, although her spirits were very high, she did not want to go home; the flat would be lonely tonight and she felt ardently a close necessity for some sort of companionship, for community.

Joan looked at the prints.

"You're a great artist."

"Nonsense! I give 'em what they don't want and make 'em like it."

"I call that an art."

Fitzhumber sat down next to her on the couch in the extra room. She was tired after watching him so closely, more tired than he; she sank back and blew upward so that a wisp of hair floated from her forehead.

"Let's have dinner."

But they sat—even though it was almost nine. It had been a good day and now in relaxation the contour of the day seemed perfect and complete. The hours and minutes she had lived since morning were in perfect accord; she felt she could live an indefinite projection of many similar days. As for leaving the studio sometime, she hated to think of that.

"Look here," he said, suddenly.

He did not move, but stared at her in aware surprise, as if he had just discovered something.

"I'll be eternally blasted and damned!"

She jumped.

"I'll be eternally shot down into hell and blasted and damned!"

"What *is* it?"

"Look here," he began again. His face was dissolving a little now; it was puzzled and suddenly pleased. He beamed.

"I'm in love with you," he said. "I've just found out."

She stared.

"Yes!" he confirmed his emotion to himself. "Joan!" This time he moved his arm.

Oh, always this must come—in her heart of hearts doubtless she wanted it to come—but it was such a *waste*! Yet, deep in her, always this desire purring; and always, too, this pressure, this internal force, which could do only one thing, which would drive her away.

He was kissing her.

"It'll end everything," she whispered.

"Even if it does—worth it."

She was trembling. No—no ——

But—why not?

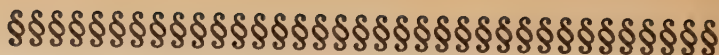
"I'll be damned," he kept muttering, "I've been in love with you all this while. I didn't know. Love!"

After all—why not?

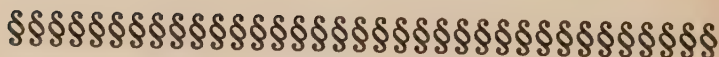
"All right," she whispered. She felt the little soft room darken.

IX

She left the studio the next day for good. Fitzhumber was stunned. She did not care. Nor did she explain.



Chapter Five



I

JOAN had her idea, but to work it out in detail needed at least a fortnight; even now she was awaiting letters from New York, to see what kind of credit she could get and what reception from various people; she must go over it with her father and settle finally a thousand small contributory odds and ends. But the idea itself was all right. That was settled.

Then, of course, she must look for a place. She found one which suited her ideally, in the first floor of one of the old buildings still standing near the Wrigley Tower; there was a good deal of room and the lease would be sure for a year. Of course the rent was high. But it wasn't as high as those rooms in the new office buildings she had first tried. They had told her calmly twelve hundred dollars per month. She had blanched.

She was still living in the water-front flat, but she decided she would move, if possible, into the same building which was to house her shop; these two little rooms were too small, they were beginning to press on her, and the noise, at first a relaxation and a welcome confusion, was now unbearable. The sirens maddened her. Well, she would move just as soon as the shop would be ready, on the first of the month.

There was a lot to do. She was getting replies now from her first letters, and soon the definite business of ordering must begin. She had a lot of things of her own she might sell, and they might help to tide her over what would undoubtedly be a very difficult beginning. And she must order her stationery. She ought to enjoy that, ordering bills, tickets, order forms, letterheads, wrapping-labels; she must get all that under way first thing tomorrow. But perhaps in this, too, it would be better to talk to her father first.

There was a knock, and her landlady entered.

"Some one to see you, Miss Tilford."

"Oh!" Joan brightened. "Who?"

"A lady."

It must be Pamela.

"A young lady? Very bright?"

"Not what you'd call bright, Miss Tilford."

Who could it be?

"Tell her to come up."

Joan waited till the second knock, a vigorous knock, and there was Fay.

"Fay! Darling! *Darling!*"

She threw herself, tumbling, into Fay's arms.

"Listen," Fay said, after only a moment, "what on *earth* did you do to Phil?"

II

Fay had cut her hair, and was a little fat. She had always been round rather than thin, and now her face was jolly and plump; her hair, short and fine, was lovely, but it seemed less red, cut off this way. She said, answering Joan's quick questions, that "Judgment Jane" had been a flop; after a thousand heartbreaks finally it had been pro-

duced, to go on a night when there were six other first nights; it did not catch on and lasted, in spite of keen critical praise, only two weeks. But she still had her job reading manuscript, and had written two other plays; one was to get a trial in June. This much Joan gathered almost at once. Fay was living alone, in a room on Fifteenth Street.

"But about Philip," Fay said. "I can stay only a day. I've come all the way here to talk about Philip."

She was direct, but it was obvious it was not easy for her to talk.

Joan motioned to a chair and tried to be extremely casual. She wondered if her face showed anything.

"Well," Joan plunged, "what about him? What's the matter? Is anything wrong?"

"A lot," Fay said.

"He seems successful. I saw the Roosevelt book announced for autumn."

"I doubt if he knows it," Fay said.

"But then what's wrong?"

"Everything."

Joan was trembling. "But I don't understand. Tell me."

"Well, the point of it is, he's just gone to hell."

She stopped. Joan waited.

"You know, when he went east, he got a tremendous job. He sold his publishers on quite a fine idea—by the way, that's the Zorn I gave you—there— isn't it?—anyway he suggested they start serial publication of a sort of dictionary of national biography for America ——"

"No, I didn't know that," Joan heard herself say.

"It was in the papers."

"I didn't read the papers."

"But it wasn't to be in one volume—not a dictionary,

really—but a series of brief independent books; eventually there were to be thirty or forty or a hundred. Philip was to be editor—select the subjects and assign people to write them. He was going to write three or four himself. Custer I think was the first—then Calhoun or somebody—then Rockefeller. In any case, it was to be *his* series. And you see what an important job that was. . . . Say, it's cold as hell here."

"Go on," Joan said.

"That was one thing. He started with a bang. In addition he did two or three articles on Chicago and a whole lot of reviewing. You couldn't pick up a paper without seeing reviews of his. Everybody printed him all at once. 'Here was a critic'—so everybody said. He had an office and all the leisure he wanted and the publishers promised to make a smash of the T. R. book. He had—he told me just after he got to New York—six books outlined, all ready to write. He was tearing to begin."

Joan tried to relax.

"He did begin. But that's all."

"But tell me—he's not sick? What happened?"

"No, not exactly sick. Joan, I do hear from people the most astonishing things about you ——"

"Never mind me. Let's hear about Philip."

"It isn't dramatic at all. There's nothing really to tell. I'm not tantalizing you, Joan. There's no climax. He simply petered out. He started like a house afire and then burned up."

"I don't believe it," Joan said.

Fay laughed, a little harshly.

"You should see him."

"What do you mean—he's ——?"

"Well, he stopped reviewing. Just quit. He had all sorts of offers coming in, and he just quit. No explana-

tion. Then he walked out of the biography office one morning, tore up all the files, tore up his Custer beginning, tore up the first manuscripts that had come in—and beat it. People were pretty sore. Then he refused to let the Roosevelt book come out. But he had signed some sort of contract or other, and the publishers insisted on their right to publish—and he couldn't sue. It was very unpleasant. He tried to steal the MS. He was caught trying to steal it. He said that it must *not* come out. He wouldn't explain."

Joan passed a hand over her forehead.

"He was all very jovial during this. He didn't go into any sort of seclusion at all. It was all a sort of terrific hysterical joke, and he kept trying to get his friends to tear up everything they had written, too. He was quite crazy. Then he left for Europe—said good-by to everyone—he was very popular those first months—he spent two hours at the phone the morning he sailed—long farewells to about forty people. He decided to go only the night before. Well, he went, and, Gee! he was back in three weeks. He didn't say anything to anybody. I saw him by accident."

"How long ago was that?"

"Let me see—early February."

"And then?"

"And since he's been back—these last four or five months—it's just getting worse and worse. He won't see anybody. He'd hardly see me. He had pneumonia and almost died—living in a *filthy* place in Brooklyn. Oh yes, he's quite well now. As you know, he's strong as a couple of bulls. But he was pretty sick. It was just silly carelessness that brought him down. Why, when some one called a doctor, there hadn't been a fire for two days and he hadn't eaten."

Joan said, "Go on."

"He's still living in that dreadful place. He won't work and, Joan, he drinks. Not badly or violently, but just a little, always. He's awfully poor—in fact, I took him out and fed him once or twice and I do think he was starving. It's quite incredible, I know—to think of people starving—but it was literally true. He's doing a little work now. Not much. He's simply broken and helpless. He's in the most dreadful state—really." Fay paused. "And he's not weak. You know that." She stopped again, moistening her lips. "Well."

Joan held herself steady.

"Now," said Fay, "what happened? He won't say a word. He's never mentioned you."

Joan nodded.

"Tell me about it. What went wrong? What did you do to him?"

III

Joan tried to tell. She sketched the story incident by incident and mood by mood as well as she could. It was surprising how painful it was to think back and how she didn't want to tell even Fay certain things.

"You're still in love with him?" Fay broke in once.

Joan shook her head.

"He hates you," Fay said.

"I doubt that."

Joan went on, and ticked off as clearly as she could the different phases of their long five months together; she talked about that early evening in the Tilford house when she first said she loved him; she proceeded to the final agreement, and then the final crash. She stopped.

"So it was because you wanted to marry him and he wanted just to sleep with you."

"Put baldly—yes."

"And also of course," Fay reflected, "the business of mutuality—that you hit each other at wrong moments."

"That was minor."

"Then it *was* just a matter of will—yours and his—you wanted marriage—he didn't—that was all."

"You can't put it down so neatly," Joan heard herself say. "It was much more, really. I wanted just to sleep with him. Sure. I should say I did. And at the end we were going away together—I was ready—we were going. Of course I did hope even then to win out finally. He would have married me in the end. Of course. He knew that, too. But he fought, anyway. At the end we broke over an accident. That was what made it so heartbreaking. No—it wasn't just an accident. It was a proof of utterly dissimilar points of view about everything. Feeling the way I did—at that time—I couldn't *stand* what he had done. That he had calmly and casually taken some one else when he wanted me—at that time it was just too much to bear. I couldn't *bear* it. It wasn't a question of will. I simply went cold and dead." She broke off. "Well——" She got up and looked out at the river. "So it was a lot more than the marriage business. There was a sort of conflict in everything—the way we thought, the way we talked. There was something deep and hard to understand in him, and in me too. I don't understand it all yet. We were *wrong*, somehow."

"Nonsense!" Fay said.

Joan shrugged.

"At the bottom it was just your pride."

"At the top."

"Well," Fay said, "I think you were a damned fool."

IV

Joan went out into the kitchen to make tea.

"What's all this?" Fay pointed to her papers.

"Oh, nothing."

"I want to hear all about you—since."

"I've had a swell time."

"But," Fay laughed, over the tea, "this is all so *strange!* You here—in this dump—cooking your own tea—badly—and there's a spot on your dress."

"Sure."

"Some one told me you were working for Fitzhumber. Oh—that's a *good* picture!" She jumped to the big portrait. "How's your father, by the way?"

"I was even a model," Joan said.

Fay hooted.

"Nice Joan."

"Shut up."

"Say, you ought to come to New York. It's quite thrilling. I have a flat—Joan, could you lend me some pictures? Oh—it's so *good*—seeing you."

"It's been a year."

Joan sipped her tea.

"But about your father?"

"Father's being a great devil."

"I want to hear."

"I won't tell you."

"What does he think of you, doing all this?"

"He's living with Hilda Jacobsen—the violinist," Joan said.

Fay looked up.

"Pamela's engaged," Joan said.

Fay took her hat from her lap and threw it across the room. "I'm through with tragedy!"

"I want to hear all about you."

"Oh, I've been fine," Fay said. "Listen—do you ever see Flynn or the old gang any more? Wish I had time to drop out at school. I had the most awful time getting your address out of Louie. Is it secret?"

"Louie thinks so."

"I've had a good time, still, it was hard at first. I'm rather poor, that's the chief trouble. But I do think the new play will go. I'll tell you about it."

"This has been rather fun here."

"May I have more tea?"

"I'm a fine cook," Joan said.

"Don't I know!"

They relaxed a little. Fay lit a cigarette. Joan watched her. She was still tense.

v

"Let's be brave," Joan began. "I want to hear this out. Now—in some ways you know Philip better than I do—you've known him longer, at any rate, and you've seen him in New York. Please tell me—what *is* it he has against marriage? Why *didn't* he want to marry me?"

Fay smoked.

"Men don't want to marry!"

"Oh!"

"I mean, a youngster like Philip—everything before him—still very untried, very inexperienced. Probably he wants to know lots of women—naturally. Why should he marry? What was there in it for him?"

"There was me."

"But think of it more strictly from the time before he met you. All his instincts and training probably as set against marriage as yours were for it. Say, all these lists and papers—what are you doing?" Joan shook her head quickly. "Philip didn't want to tie himself down. That was part of it. I'm sure."

"Yes," Joan agreed. "But not enough—I've always thought."

"And of course there was something else," Fay reminisced. "Of course—I'd forgotten—another thing must have had something to do with it—his father."

"His what?" asked Joan, sharply.

VI

"Well, naturally," Fay said.

"I never knew Philip had a father."

"What?"

"He never mentioned his father."

Fay whistled. "The scoundrel!"

Joan looked at her.

"He has a mad father," Fay said.

Joan put down her saucer levelly.

"What? How do you know?"

"He's not secretive about it. But he's actually—in a queer way—forgotten it." Fay looked at Joan. "I know because I knew him in Iowa when he was a boy—knew the family."

"You never told me about his father."

"I know. But, honestly, I had almost forgotten it, too. I don't think it's *ever* in Philip's mind. He was terribly sensitive about it when he was a kid, and then, growing

up, he made himself forget—he obliterated it. He just never admitted it was true.”

“I never knew he had a father.”

Fay put out her hands.

“He never talked about his family much,” Joan thought back. “He was very fond of his mother. But he never mentioned his father. I thought, of course, his father died long ago.”

“I don’t know much about it,” Fay said, helplessly.

“Tell me everything.”

“There’s nothing to tell. There never is, about important things. His father is in an asylum somewhere—a hospital. Philip never sees him. He supports him, of course. That’s all.”

“I see,” Joan murmured.

Fay was watching her.

“I see,” Joan repeated. “So he can’t have children.”

Fay shrugged.

“Oh, why didn’t he *tell* me? If only he had *told* me!”

“Don’t ——”

“If only he could have trusted me, I’d have understood. Why didn’t he *tell* me?”

“I know why. He had forgotten. His father didn’t exist in his present life. That was all. It was hidden in his brain that he had a father. He never told me, for instance. And for instance, he never told me *not* to tell you. I knew from when he was a boy.”

“I never knew he had a father,” Joan barely whispered. She rose. “Fay,” she asked, “do you come here as an emissary?”

“No,” said Fay. “He doesn’t know I’m here.”

“Good,” said Joan at first.

Then she sat down again, crumpling.

“Oh, but it’s too late now; it’s all over.”

VII

She told Fay vaguely about the work she planned to do: Fay was interested and thought it was a good idea. A bookstore was always rather exciting, especially the kind Joan had in mind. She asked her in detail what she had been doing, and Joan recounted the episodes of Corcoran and Macmillan and Fitzhumber, after her first desperate searching for a fall. Fay whooped. She was curious about Mr. Tilford, but about this Joan did not want to talk. An inhibition of a sort she found difficult to explain was deep in her mind in connection with Miss Jacobsen; really, because she liked Hilda and approved theoretically of what her father was doing, her attitude was silly; but the analogy between her father's having *taken* his love affair, while she had let hers go, and let it go in indirect fashion because of her father, was too much. She could not face it clearly; she preferred not to think. But evidently Fay was guessing pretty well. And all the rest, with exciting sensations of relief, Joan eagerly told. There—it was all out—it was good to talk! All these bottled months escaping!

"Good," said Fay, at Joan's conclusion. "Let's go out and have some dinner."

"Of course. But it's early."

"I do hate to leave again tomorrow. Must take the Century back at noon. And I only arrived two hours ago. But as it is, I'm taking an awful chance, playing hookey this way. You know, I phoned my boss and said I was ill—*me* ill!—and in case he phones or calls, I'm lost. I must get back."

"A thousand miles for half a day. That's a good American week-end."

"But about you." Either Fay or Joan always returned to the one topic. "Here we have old Philip pickled and brined. Now—really—I want to hear your end of it."

"I've told you," said Joan.

It was less of an effort now to talk about him.

"Not enough," Fay said.

"All right," Joan nodded. "Ask what you want. Fire away."

Fay wanted simply to have her explanation of the converse of the difficulty. Now they had a clue to Philip's behavior—what about Joan's? Why, Fay asked, hadn't she given herself? "That's a silly phrase. Why *didn't* you go with him?"

Joan said that at the end it was decided she was going to.

"But," Fay pointed out, "it took you so long!"

Joan said, "I *wouldn't* just be his mistress."

"Yes," Fay agreed, "and I want to know why."

Of course Joan couldn't tell her what she secretly believed, that she had broken with Philip not just in jealousy, but because something deep in Philip served to make that jealousy important; nor could she explain what had been a secret consolation, that she felt her break with him was a sign not of weakness in her, but of strength; she felt still a positive rightness in her behavior; she felt that she had been strong and right. But as to details she could talk, and she tried to explain. It was rather hard to explain. Fay nodded:

"I agree with you for yourself. With me it woulda been different—has been. I do think you took it all too seriously."

"That was the fault of my upbringing."

"We don't seem to get away from fathers in this story."

"But," said Joan, "I never made any actual fetish of

chastity—if that's what you mean. I simply never thought of it. It just was."

"It wasn't for me," Fay said, grimly.

"We're pretty different," Joan said.

"Yes."

"And which of us—in an affair like this—comes out better?" Joan answered herself: "You, I suppose."

"Yes," Fay agreed. "I'd never been worried much by Philip and that girl at the end. I don't think I'd have cared."

"Lucky you."

"Repressed virginity and sexual jealousy go hand in hand, I think," Fay said.

"Perhaps I wouldn't worry about that scene now," Joan said, wryly.

"I suppose you feel something's gone—in you?"

"Philip's gone."

"No, I mean because you've slept with people."

Joan shook her head: "No, not specially. I mean—well, in a way, yes."

She explained.

Fay moved for her hat.

"Well, darn it," Joan laughed, "what is it that makes *you* make love?"

"Animal heat," Fay answered, turning to the door.

Joan was thinking, "I mustn't let all this upset me again, I *mustn't!*"

VIII

"I see it all so differently from you," Fay ventured.

"Now, as to Phil——"

She caught herself: she stopped.

Joan was getting her hat, too.

"About Phil." Fay turned. "Are you going to do anything? What are you going to do?"

"Nothing, I'm afraid."

"Come—please."

"I'm through," Joan said.

"That jealousy—that old burn—surely it isn't so strong—still?"

"It isn't that. I don't want to any more."

"Liar."

"It's true," Joan said. "I don't want to see him again. It'd all start over again. It's not worth it. I'm tired of it. I'm through."

Fay shook her head.

"I thought surely I'd bring you back to New York."

"Oh no!"

"But you thought so, too—thought that you'd come—for a moment."

"Yes," Joan admitted. "For one moment, yes. But no—really—not now—I can't."

"Philip—he'll go to hell."

"Look at me."

"Nonsense! You're all right."

"There's no chance of my coming, Fay. I can't."

"You make me rather sore," Fay said. "Philip—he'll go to hell."

"Let him."

"I may have to marry him myself," Fay laughed slightly.

"Go ahead," Joan said. "But, Fay, I don't think you will."

"No, I won't. I was kidding." She walked to the window. "Joan—please come."

"I tell you—I can't."

"And just because of your pride."

Joan walked over to her.

"I tell you—this isn't a matter of will—it isn't really what I *want* to do that counts. Something is in me fighting itself out. I can't resist."

"You must have been damn hurt."

"I was."

"Please come, Joan."

"No."

"I appeal to you to come."

"No."

"And just because Philip was foolish and spoiled everything at the end by making you jealous."

"It was more than that."

"*Please* come, Joan."

"No."

Fay put an arm around her. Joan's face was turned away, with her throat strained sideways. Fay tried to pull her around.

"Why, old Joan, it was all such a mix-up. Philip loves you so much—he's *dying* of love for you—just as I think you're dying for love of him."

Joan shook her head.

"And listen, it's so absurd and childish to let jealousy interfere with it—or pride. Why, to show you how utterly unimportant that sort of thing was with Philip—really, you are being childish—did you know *I* lived with Philip once! Why, yes—surely—I thought you knew. Oh, long ago when I first met him in New York after not having seen him for many years. Don't you remember how I joked about it—you thought I was in love. Then he came to Chicago. I thought *surely* you guessed. Of course I didn't dare say anything. Philip? Oh, he'd forgotten it. Soon as he saw you. Sure. Those things *don't* count, Joan. You ought to know. They're entirely

unimportant. That's why I'm telling you this, to prove it to you. Why, old Joan, my *dear* Joan—to cut yourself up this way—as if it mattered ——”

“You,” Joan said. She stared at her.

“Now—please ——”

“You, too.”

Good Lord. Had Philip slept with every woman he had ever *met*?

“But, Joan ——”

“Please.”

“Now good Heavens! After all this—you said you were cold and dead—good Heavens!”

“I don't want to talk.”

“That's why I told you—to show you how *unimportant* ——”

“Please.”

Fay looked at her. “Well!” she exclaimed. She walked closer, trying to embrace her.

Joan backed away.

Good Lord! Had Philip—with every woman! Joan felt something twisting in her brain. *Every* woman! Except herself. She whom he wanted, who wanted him. Good Lord! Both of them messing about this way—it was all such a waste!—and now here Fay, whom also she loved—now really this was too much. Good Lord! She did love him still—she was in love with him still just like yesterday—here she was back at the beginning of the circle again—this hot blinding hurt going down in her—and now of all times when she thought it was over, when she was rather happy again at last, when life began to have some meaning and love some future reality. And now—what would she do *now*?

“Please,” Joan protested at Fay's embrace faintly.

“Joan darling!” Fay kept repeating.

"No. Go away."

"My God! What have I done?"

"Nothing," Joan said, dully. "But please go away."

IX

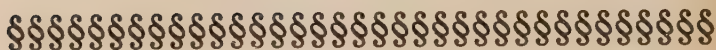
Joan sat. Well now, what a silly exhibition! No, no—she couldn't help it. Poor Fay! She couldn't help it, either.

Fay was gone.

They were all going.



Chapter Six



I

THE bookstore was never planned as a whole, systematically or presciently; it began, on the contrary, as an impulse, and as an impulse grew, first in her mind, then in actuality; and almost every change and development that occurred was shaped by idle incidents, so that the shop grew of itself, slowly like a child. It was a behaviorist bookstore. Joan had one rule: she sold only good books. It didn't matter in the least if *Pansies of Passion*, by Mrs. Adolphus Thingbobber, were selling ten thousand copies a week, or if, more importantly, several people a day asked for it in her shop. "No," Joan would say crisply, "I sell books only." Her first idea was for exclusively a poetry bookshop like the one she had heard of in London near the British Museum; this idea, however, she dropped when she found how much better business it was to include all good contemporary books, of whatever individual kind, and of whatever nationality too. One of her first impulses was to specialize in foreign books, and certainly have departments in French and Italian, and perhaps in German later.

The shop consisted of a window and three rooms. The window was broad and high, and she filled it as artfully as she could with those first editions she was getting now

from England. The first two rooms were the shop proper. She had a lot of trouble getting a carpenter to build exactly the kind of open shelves she wanted, and was shocked to find how expensive even a very ordinary carpenter was; once the shelves were ready, the first books had arrived from the wholesalers', and in a week she was ready to begin. In the first room she kept what she hoped would be her quickly moving stock, current books of every kind; she stacked most of them on two big tables and, after a thousand efforts to evolve a scheme, began a semi-alphabetical arrangement by class of books. She had no desks or ornamentalia of business in the first room; it was designed to look like a private library, except, of course, that the books wore wrappers. The second room was mostly a single gigantic table. On this was every literary magazine, and especially every foreign magazine, she could find; along the walls were rarer, more esoteric books than those in the front room; all her art books, for instance, most of her first editions, most of her current importations. There was a third room behind, a smaller one; it had to do for an office. There was not much space, but it kept a desk and a filing cabinet. The packing and mailing department was still in the corridor outside, and the landlord was getting a little impatient.

"Oh, what does it matter?" protested Joan.

But she was careful about important details. That is, she bought green-and-blue ribbon to use in place of string, and pleasant green wrapping-paper. For a long time she meditated on a new idea: should she announce calmly in the big window that everything in her shop cost exactly five per cent more than in any other shop in Chicago? This would be silly, surely, but it might work. Americans did fall for that sort of thing, especially those living in this smart neighborhood. Another early idea was to

serve tea every afternoon, gratis, but she gave it up; too many people came, and they were mostly bores; besides, it cost too much. And what a lot the first advertisements cost! Heavens! She had no notion two inches in the *News* or *Tribune* could be worth so much. In fact, all of the financial end of it was extremely disconcerting. She was likely to make a great flop of this. Certainly the first six months she wouldn't begin to pay her way.

Her accumulated allowance had come to \$1,780. She knew that would not be enough, and, talking it over with her father, asked what she should do; he was first indulgent to the idea, then helpful, and at the end actually enthusiastic; and he loaned her a thousand dollars. He was very careful to say he did not think of the shop as a whim; he expected it to be well managed so that it would be interesting and important; he said he expected to have his thousand back. "Gee! you're optimistic," Joan laughed. But inwardly she swore she would do it. This *was* something; this *was* a real test! Of the \$2,780 she used about \$400 for stationery, advertisements, signs, and her essential shelves and cases; she paid the first month's rent, which was \$350; that left really quite a lot with which to buy books. Next month she would be able to tell better where she stood. The first month was hopeless. She had it all figured out nicely until she found she had forgotten to pay herself any salary. Well, she would make her allowance do for salary and for more than salary; she would live on half of it and put the rest in books. Of course, she brought down most of her own books to fill out the shelves in the second room; and then, nine times out of ten, when some one wanted to buy one of them, she realized at once she could not live without that book. "No," she would say, laughing. "I'm a fool, but that's not for sale."

Tentatively the business looked like this. Her expenses were—she decided for the twentieth time to put them down:

Rent	\$350
Interest, father's money.....	10
Overhead	50
Buying stock	350

It was at this point she always began to scowl, deciding she wouldn't buy any more stock, and, anyway, what use was overhead? She would just eliminate overhead; anyway, she wasn't sure what it meant, but her father always said she must count it in. Then there was the salary of the boy who did the packing. Well, that was only four dollars a week, and the little shaver didn't deserve more. Some day she would have an assistant, but that wasn't urgent, because Pamela was working for the fun of it, for nothing. She figured it out over again. Leaving till later calculations of the stock—anyway, she had bought a lot already—she must clear about four hundred dollars a month to break even.

Well, her profit on books was approximately thirty per cent. That meant she must sell—how much was it?—at least twelve hundred dollars' worth of books a month. It looked impossible. But still, that was less than \$50 a day, and on most days so far she had done better than that. Of course, new and dazzling expenses were bound to crop up. When her credit came due at the wholesalers' and from the people in London and New York, then would be the day! But she was sure, selling fifty dollars' worth of books a day, she could just slide under. All she had to do now was wait and see. And sell books.

Night after night she would count up helplessly, cover

the tables with dust covers, return to her desk, count up again, then dodge home across the street, exhilarated, somehow, and dead tired. At night figures danced in her brain. After a few weeks things seemed, temporarily, to be going well. She thought, "I guess there must be some dreadful streak of avarice in me." Anyway she was gloating over her cash box. "But no, I'll give it all away foolishly tomorrow." She got ready for bed. "I'll never be a business woman," she thought. She added, "Thank God!" Life was quite good these days.

II

There was Corcoran. She lived with him a while, and in an aimless way felt a little in love with him.

There was a young Viennese painter, Steinholdt, who drifted into the shop one day; he was enraptured by her German books; he stayed.

There was a party upstairs in one of the studios one night, and one young man who watched her; it was queer, she never knew his name.

III

Directly after Fay left Joan had felt no emotion. She waved good-by from the window and found a sandwich for dinner; then sat and read, her mind perfectly blank, until toward midnight. She had turned many pages, but otherwise had not moved. She slept soundly at first, and then, at about three in the morning, awoke with an intense, violent headache; first Fay's revelation came back to her and she thought it must have been a dream; walking around the room, she tried to persuade herself it was a nightmare. She kept shaking her head, refusing to believe

that Fay had ever been there. But in the morning the dream had not dissolved and stonily through the day it grew to factuality in her mind; by the end of that day bewilderment and resentment had passed, and there only remained, still beating in her head, something that hurt.

She did not break loose and plunge into reaction. Instead, she felt like a convalescent after a long illness who has had a sudden relapse; and at the moment weakness was too great for consideration of any deliberate escape. For a month curious new complexes dove and bubbled in her brain; she could not look at simple words like even "sex" on a printed page without sickness and anguish. It seemed, too, that all the reading matter in the world conspired to remind her of the one thing of which she could not bear to be reminded; and in books, just as in life, to avoid this thing was difficult and made life dubious and wrong. Some one tried to make love to her during that first month, and he never dared to come see her again; she did not see him again all her life. Even at that time, however, anger had not been her chief emotion.

But she knew that such a swing of the pendulum, so deeply to one darkness in her mind, was less dangerous than any surface bubbling; the pendulum swung so deep it must swing out again; and meanwhile she felt she was suppressing nothing, that in later years nothing now hidden would creep out to destroy her. She hid nothing. She tasted tragedy fully. And she knew this time convalescence would be faster. It was as if she had been injected with some powerful virus, which, like an inoculation given by doctors in some illnesses, produced first a violent fever, which then by its very violence swept up and away and out all the lurking infection which for months had kept her weak. Meanwhile there was work. During the first month at the shop she was a fiend for work; and

slowly at first, then faster, the pain and rage of her disorder passed. For a time she feared the shock had been too much and that she might be frigid. But that was ridiculous. Here already people like Corcoran were around; and in a month more she was very glad they were around.

Now—reaction was possible now. Quick! Take it all! Choke herself deep into it—dive deep!

IV

Sometimes, a few months later, she thought of Fay and Philip again; once, sinking into absurd depression, she tried to rebuild the conversation in her mind; to try imaginatively but retrogressively to live the scene again: to correct her own omissions, to anticipate Fay's questions, to be direct and cool in answer. How she did hate in retrospect her weakness at the end! But this was silly—it got her nowhere. Much the best thing to do was forget. But thinking of Fay led her to outline in her mind those confusions which had kept her from being perfectly clear to herself both at the time Philip was in her life and when she explained later to Fay how she had failed; to outline them clearly and once for all. She didn't want again to face her own conduct helpless and puzzled; therefore she must think. And to explain a thing always helped one to forget it.

After all, to Fay's "Well, why didn't you?" she had said nothing really important. Now, what *was* it that had kept her from saying yes? She progressed to details. Well, a girl brought up like herself grew to count on certain elemental principles, to feel in her nature and her very nervous system certain permanent strains of character. There she was. Her family was important and

her father was important; with them, as with herself, chastity was not so much a rule of conduct as an understood reason for conduct; she had questioned it, for years and years, no more than she questioned the color of her face. And marriage was likewise in her nature and her nervous system, and in her mind, too, as an entity and a verity. Well, brought up with these concepts as part of the marrow of her bones, as the lining of the gray surface of her brain, why, no matter how she loved a man, she couldn't wipe them out overnight. Then, of course, there had been, in addition, a certain Tilford stubbornness. That added. She thought all along that she would win; just as all along, paradoxically, she had known that if by some chance she appeared to be losing, then she would say yes, she would admit she was defeated, she would give in and give herself—to hope for eventual victory later. Then there was another thing—she had called it simply strength to Fay—that infinitely complex web of prejudices and restraints, social conventions and sexual principles, æsthetic inhibitions and ethical fastidiousnesses, which, quite in spite of herself, made her feel innately that living with a man outside marriage was something that one did *not* do. And then, of course, there was a romantic element, the feeling that she was precious, more precious than any man, for instance, if only because some day she could have children; and that as a result this preciousness must be saved for some one who was right; and that—Oh, but this was all sheer romance!—she broke off. "Still," she meditated, "in those days I must have felt it." She thought of herself now.

But despite these things, at the end she had given in and was going away with him. Then the crash. The reason for the crash was sexual jealousy and little else. That she could feel such jealousy and such sense of out-

rage was again a result of her upbringing, her environment, her character. And a result, of course, more directly of one other thing—her virginity. Fay had said that she, Fay, would have understood, would not have cared. And Joan thought that now she, Joan, would have understood—at least better. No more would she see things purely as black and white; henceforth she would appreciate the grays. It was a funny thing how prejudices moved you—sometimes—prejudices which, until you saw your own behavior in contrast to that of others, you had no idea existed. Perhaps there always had been a prejudiced wrongness in her mind in connection with the idea of sexual pleasure—a feeling that sexual pleasure was wrong. That was Puritanism. In some respects Puritanism was a fine thing. She still thought so. But in her case it had certainly served to make a pretty mess of her life. In the narrow sense, of course, she had never been a Puritan, not in the crass, ugly sense; for she loved, like her father, beauty. Nevertheless, subconsciously, all those years she must have thought of sex as evil. And of course such an obscene wrongness might have been in her mind forever, a cramping, devitalizing, disgusting influence, had not Philip happened along; had not he blasted it away. Philip was a good thing then. She lost him, but through him she discovered her soul. How trite that sounded. Evidently it was almost true. Pity she couldn't have had both. Well, Fay said she could have had both—if she hadn't been a silly squeamish virgin.

Then again there was that other old business. She had had for many years a notion of aristocracy in connection with herself: of course this didn't mean in any sense the traditional aristocracy of lords and maid servants; true, it depended to a certain extent on her family,

but not in any way contradistinctive to that which was bourgeois. She would have felt herself an aristocrat born on Halsted Street. Now—define it—what then did she mean? Well, by aristocracy she meant order. She meant, too, contempt of fear, distaste of prejudice, suspicion of indulgence, freedom from jealousy—that was the way some one else once had sketched it—but most of all she meant *order*. She saw herself as a pattern; the pattern should be equipoised, in balance; each part of the pattern should contribute to the whole and there should be nothing warped or gnarled or out of plane. By order, then, she meant symmetry; then by aristocracy she meant symmetry. In other words, she meant by aristocracy that she did not do things merely on impulse, she did not do things until she thought them out to see how, when done, they would fit the pattern. She could proceed again. Aristocracy meant reason. But enough on that side of the argument.

For of course she must move now to the other side, to explore the forces which were opposed to order. Her life should have symmetry—it should be complete, with all parts accounted for—not necessarily in control—oh no!—but when out of control recognizable as out of control. Well, what changed the pattern, what put her out of control? What moved her, what made her hungry, what gave her desire, what made her live? For a long time it seemed easy to summarize all the external forces seeking to disarrange her traditional, reasoned life as grouped together under the name of beauty. She thought beauty was antithetical to order, and that as beauty came into her life the pattern was pulled awry, it slipped out of balance, it became disorderly. The impingement of beauty was at the expense of order; but later, into a new

pattern, the beauty might be assimilated. That was the art of life. Also, that must be what she meant when she thought of "seizing" beauty. Beauty was an external force which impregnated change, color, rhythm, into order; in the process being itself changed as it disappeared, absorbed into the new pattern.

This at least was what she must hope. Each time beauty impinged on her life there was a slight deviation in her life; and until the beauty was properly assimilated so that the pattern stabilized, she was unhappy, she yearned, she was hungry. Then beauty became part of her; new order arose. All this—anyway—was what she must hope. But about Philip? How account for Philip? Well, he was an external force in which was beauty, which, however, was so strong it did not fit into any orderly pattern to be absorbed; it shattered the pattern and wrecked it. But perhaps that was because the pattern itself was at once too viscous and too frangible; she had not allowed in the past sufficient small deviations so that it should be supple enough to receive a big one. The pattern had solidified until no longer was it flexible; it could not bend, and at Philip's touch it broke. Well— But Joan threw up her hands. Was this all reasonable? Yes. Maybe in a year she would think quite differently. But now it was the most plausible analysis she could make. Well, forget it. Such theorizings in fact were departing her very rapidly.

It all did seem to get back to the chastity business. She pondered a little longer, and tried to see her old self differently. She was a virgin and therefore had fallen in love so unbalancedly with Phil; she was a virgin and therefore had not been able to achieve and satisfy that love; she was a virgin and couldn't forget it. It all

seemed a vicious circle. Well, luckily she had broken it, now. The pattern had enough small deviations by this time so that if anyone else came along there would be no difficulty about its elasticity. None at all. She smiled rather ruefully. In a way it was all her father's fault. She should have been taught more proper values. Maybe Fay was right. Maybe virginity *was* evil.

No. Nothing was evil.

v

One thing bothered her for months after she opened the shop. Here it was—October, 1926. She had not seen him for fourteen months then. His book came out.

At first she feared she would feel an inhibition in connection with this confounded book; she avoided it, in fact, for a day, saying only, "Oh, look here!" when it came, then dropping it; then she swore at herself. The next day she put three copies in the window, several on the front-room table, a stack on the magazine table, one on her dressing-table, two on her desk, several on the open shelves, one propped up against her mirror, another in the middle of the floor near her bed, and a final one in the desk drawer where she kept her letters.

"I'll get over being afraid of that book if I have to *swallow* it!" she thought.

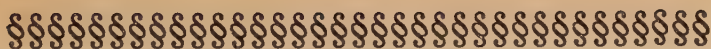
She was grim. The book sold well.

vi

There was Corcoran, off and on. She did like Corcoran. He demanded little, he took rather a lot; and to know him casually was a solace.

There was a boy named Arnoldson, eager and fond of books, fresh from school and anxious about little reviews in the literary pages; he had fire in him somewhere and curious, almost perfectly black eyes.

There was a doctor who came into the shop often—yes—yes ——



Chapter Seven



I

THE shop never became really fashionable. Joan had no hope of competing with the regular booksellers, but she did think that a very tiny and individual shop, in this new neighborhood, would have some chance of sudden sensational freak-like success—but it didn't. People didn't buy books. That was evidently one of the verities of this world. But, on the other hand, the shop wasn't a flat failure. By living herself on her allowance, very cheaply, and putting most of the allowance into the shop, she just managed, all during the first six months, to break even; and then, after the first six months, she made a little money, and she knew that if she wanted to hold out long enough, say three or four years, perhaps she would have a business. But she wasn't thinking of permanence in the bookshop. She wanted it only as a phase. And it was a shame, she felt, that it wasn't really successful, that it was just failing of real success. But then about November she encountered an idea.

An old classmate, Georgiana Misselwitz, back from Europe, found Joan one day in the shop, and they had an hour of excited, voluble reminiscence. Joan explained what she was doing. "I'm just barely making it go," she

confessed; "after all the bills were paid last month I cleared \$22.60. Beautiful, isn't it?"

"Well," Georgiana suggested, "why don't you turn it into a library?" Georgiana explained. In Europe, that is to say in several shops in London, in Paris near the Odéon and out in Montparnasse, in Rome just across from the American Express, there were little libraries lending only good books, on a basis evidently still unknown in America; there was no nuisance about cards, or fees day by day, or complicated reckonings; instead people paid an initial small deposit, and then a certain sum, depending on how many books they took, by the week or month. They could keep the books as long as they liked, or could exchange them every day if they chose; the shop must always promise to supply, buying it if necessary, any new book demanded. "Now, that is an idea!" Joan said, drawing it quickly into her mind. She got the details straight. Georgiana helped her and for a week they worked like beavers. In another few days they had their announcement ready.

"I'm hiring you," Joan decided. "I'm confident about this."

Georgiana was a bubbler. She bubbled with excitement always, and often when there was nothing to get excited about; as a result she lived an almost catastrophic life, and continually was miraculously escaping bus crashes, dangerous chance meetings on the streets, mad policemen, drunken women. These things she always bubbled about to Joan, chattering, giggling. She chattered when she sold books, and her voice was insufficient vehicle; often she chattered with her feet, too, and sold *The Golden Bough* to a tap-tap of "*Ca, C'est Paris.*" "I can't understand why you haven't a phonograph upstairs," she would say. She was witty and impertinent.

Her nose was slightly beveled at the very tip, as if in childhood she had pressed it hungrily against cold window-panes. (She had, she explained.) Joan liked her immensely, including the bubbling.

Georgiana's idea caught on almost at once. It was a convenient compromise for people who didn't want to buy every new good book that came along, and yet were unable to obtain them at the public libraries. With Joan they paid down a five-dollar deposit, subscribed for one book at a time at fifty cents a week, two for seventy-five cents, three for a dollar, and so on; although almost at once Joan got most of her subscribers on a monthly basis, and some by the year; they could change their books as often as they pleased, or keep them as indefinitely as they prolonged their subscriptions. It was something new, a sort of club, and it became an instant, resounding success. Meanwhile, of course, anybody who wanted to buy books could buy as many as he wanted. The stock was the same. Joan gave a series of complicated descending discounts on purchases of books which had been lent to people once or twice. Every six months they planned a gigantic cut-rate sale. The publishers, seeing at once Joan had a real idea, helped her to the limit. There was no need to change the shop at all; bookstore and library were the same. You bought or rented or did both, as you chose.

There was plenty of clerical work to do. Georgiana did it. Joan stayed in the outer rooms, selling, arguing, gossiping. Many of her old friends had never visited, except once in curiosity, the old shop; now they thronged it. She evolved various supplementary systems; there was a special subscription for art books, and a special guaranteed service, in which she promised to get at short notice any book in print. Many people took a dozen books a fortnight, one at a time; these were balanced by those who

dropped in occasionally, took a couple of books, and maybe returned them two months later; it didn't matter; anybody could have as many or as few books as often or as seldom as he liked; provided the proper subscription was paid. There were many books long overdue, and many that they never recovered, but in general the five-dollar deposit covered the loss amply; in the case of expensive first editions or art books the first deposit was larger. At the end of the first month Joan had cleared almost all of the loss in the six months of the bookshop; that is, she had regained that thousand dollars from her father. This was so much better than *selling* books! When you sold a book you cleared a narrow profit and that was all. When you rented a book, the book was there indefinitely, making its former sale-profit every time it went out. In six months Joan was sure she would be free as air—of everything. For the first time in almost a year, she went out and bought herself things—an autumn coat, of beige cross-tweed with a beaver collar; a small soft brown cloche hat; some new shoes; two silk dresses to wear in the shop. Her old lingerie, of course, would last forever. She had enough for a boarding-school.

"This is superb!" she kept saying to herself, still in wonder. "I've never been so happy!"

She raised Georgiana's salary, got her car from the Tilford garage, and decided to move.

II

This was so much better than that old dreadful flat! Here she had space. What a precious thing space was! And a view! She had never realized, all these months, how much she missed a view. Of course it was almost too perfect to be true, to get that top studio in the same

building as her shop. There was no elevator and that was why the rent was so low. Not so darned low at that—ninety dollars. It was a big studio, with an immense window facing the lake to the northeast; half the roof was a skylight and she thought she never had seen a room so light and sunny. The sun came down so that she felt outdoors. She was on the sixth floor, which was a long climb about a million times a day; but by looking between two chimneys, and they were rather charming chimneys, she could see the lake. The lake! She could turn a handspring twice over in the big studio room and little handsprings in each of the other rooms. For the first day she could do nothing but pace out the rooms, her shoulders back, smiling, sighing. And to think, now she could have people come to see her; it was almost too good to believe!

There had never been so much fun as moving out her rugs and furniture from that abominable hole near the river and setting out to furnish the studio. Never! She moved the last auto-load, and looked back at the old flat in unregretting, definite farewell. She had lived in that detestable place almost six months! And now she was moving to her own earned paradise. The studio was so big that her rugs looked scant; she got some more from home. She would use the furniture already there, and luckily it was rather nice furniture; but she did want her own rugs. The big Sarouk looked like a green-blue pond in the smooth sunlight; at the side the Kermanshah was rich gold-red. There was plenty of room for her pictures, and a bookcase might very nicely be built triangularly under the staircase which wound upward from one corner to her small bedroom. Of course the walls must be painted. Pale blue or green, evidently. She telephoned wildly, and found Corcoran, Arnoldson, Pamela, Geor-

giana, Estelle Harbord, young Steinholdt, a few others; they worked all Saturday afternoon, all night, Sunday till noon, and then late Sunday evening; and the walls were done. Joan made coffee with a paint-brush in her hand and her smock a sticky mass of color; her hair kept falling across her face and she had pale-green stains on her face from wiping the hair upward; Sunday night they started dancing, and on Monday, opening the shop, she felt like a happy catastrophe. She bought two big candlesticks, and found twisting, orange candles, enormous ones; the curtains weren't ready yet; they must be of orange. The batik was rather a bad color for the room; she meditated long, but by moving the piano to the other corner its use became possible. One of the rugs she finally decided to hang on the wall. She must get lots of flowers. There was an immense square silk-covered couch rising straight from the floor in one corner of the studio; she decided she might sleep there instead of upstairs in the small bedroom, and bought for it bright square cushions in black and orange. The kitchen was somewhat rudimentary. The bathroom was oldish, with linoleum floor and a cracked, stained tub; but it would do.

"If you don't like it I'll just die," Joan said.

For of course presently she had a small informal party and Mr. Tilford and Mrs. Pomeroy, Pamela and Ralph, all came.

"Isn't it *perfect*?" Joan kept saying, while attempting an objective attitude of strict impartiality.

She wanted so much that her father should say he liked it! There they came in, Mr. Tilford first, peering benevolently, Pamela disorderly, and Mrs. Pomeroy badly out of breath.

"I'm not sure all those stairs are good for you, Joan!" was her opening remark. "All those stairs——" she

shook her head with her familiar sideways "Tut-tut-tut-tit-tit-tit-ttt!" from her tongue.

"I run up," Joan laughed. Mr. Tilford walked into the middle of the room, looking first around him carefully, then upward, then around again. Evidently he didn't know quite what to say.

"Why, very good, Joan; why, very good," he nodded twice.

Pamela was, of course, as proud of the studio as Joan was; she marched Mrs. Pomeroy and her father from corner to corner, pointing out this and that with extreme proprietary unction.

"And I painted all that section!" she said.

Joan stood rather helpless, with her arms a little raised. Ralph was next to her, watching Pamela. Mr. Tilford circled the room again as Mrs. Pomeroy wedged her way up the narrow staircase; she called down that the bedroom seemed a little small.

"I sleep down here," Joan said.

Mr. Tilford was still very silent and she watched him; on his face was a curious variety of dismay and pleasure. But of course not for the world would he say anything. He came over to her and she felt his hand close on her arm just over the elbow with infinitely cautious, loving warmth.

"It's very fine, Joan," he said.

"Oh," she replied, "you should see it by day!—with the sun!"

She had some sandwiches ready and Mrs. Pomeroy said she would make the coffee.

They filed out toward midnight, after long quiet gossip; and Joan was touched to see them go.

They called good-bys back up the stairs and she remembered the several characters of their farewells; in her

father's face she saw a feeling that he had lost her. She knew quite well he must have come hoping to say to her, "Isn't it about time, Joan? Don't you want to come to us, to come home?" But he had not said it, or hinted it, because he saw what pleasure she was having in her own place; he had said nothing because obviously he could not bear to sway her from what she had chosen by what would have been, after all, a sentimental, irrelevant appeal. But she was stricken, watching his face, listening to him. Their footsteps were almost inaudible now, down the long stairway. They had filed out very formally, a little self-consciously, each of them with a formal, "Good night." "I'll see you again soon," Joan had said. Now it was rather touching. She was alone. She walked through the big room. Peering over the sill of the window, almost doubled over it, she looked down, then up and outward to the lake. And her father was alone, too, in that big house. That is, Hilda, she was sure, hadn't been in Chicago all summer; and as far as she knew her father hadn't traveled. A faint light was discernible outlining the blue-black clouds. In the buildings toward the lake there were many lighted windows; people in shirt sleeves moved behind them, bending to others; somewhere she heard a baby cry.

III

She woke up one morning and she was out of love with Philip. She slept usually curled up; she stretched, yawned, and walked to the window. The book she had been reading was on the floor where she had dropped it, resting like a roof on the inner pages; the ash tray with a few crumpled cigarettes was on the middle table, and on the table next to the bed was a glass of water, a chewed lead

pencil, and a tube of cold cream, squeezed at the bottom and wrinkled. Everything was the same. She looked outside; the air was colder because it was almost autumn again, but the view was the same; she had an odd impulse to look at herself, her hair tousled and one cheek red where it had lain against her fist; she was the same. But the world was different. Something had been happening these few months, and now she knew what it was. Philip was over.

She shuffled into the kitchen, her slippers sliding over the floor, and made coffee. The *Tribune* was under the doorstep and she opened it. One of the stories interested her and she became immediately absorbed in it, forgetting her emotion. She finished the story and later recollected the emotion. Then it was quite true. Even as change, it wasn't in her mind importantly. She felt rather lost and began to laugh. She remembered Fay and how her dialogue with Fay that day must indeed have acted as a powerful antitoxin, dragging up out of her by its own fury all the remnants of illness which had been in her body, making her so violently ill that when she recovered all traces of the former illness were obliterated. Yes, that must have done it. Hello! Here was some mail. She read it quickly. It was almost nine; she must hurry and open the shop.

She forgot about everything except her work till noon. Then she recollected Philip again, and again forced her mind to the realization that indeed the ghost was gone. She didn't think of him any more. When she thought of him he might be anybody. He might be Ralph. Really this was amazing! She consulted herself, silent and a little scared, for an hour. Yes, it was true. She was beyond Philip. He would never trouble her again. She did not feel any especial sensation of relief; he had slipped away

too quietly and gradually, these last few months. He was over. That was all. And once more—now—she had a treaty with familiar things.

IV

Pamela dropped in one of these brisk, hard, sunny days; she swiped off her hat and sat down, spilling her hair. She always sat with curious and peculiar adjustments of her legs in relation to each other, herself, and the chair; she managed to get into more impossible positions in fewer moments than anyone Joan ever knew. This time she was only in the chair a moment, however; she extricated herself upward and said, "Oh, the devil!"

She then scowled until Joan asked her what was wrong. "I'm not going to marry Ralph!"

V

"What on earth is the matter?" Joan demanded when they were upstairs.

"You," said Pamela.

"Me?"

"Well, yes, indirectly."

"What d'you mean?"

Pamela nodded, lips compressed.

"Here you are, darn you," Pamela said. "You're living your own sort of life and you're not tied down to anything, and you have adventures. Oh yes. Don't you? Well, it seems awfully stuffy for me just to go off and *marry* somebody—for keeps. Oh sure I'm in love with Ralph. Frightfully. But you know, he's still *terrible* if I go out with some one else; if I tell him I've kissed some

one else he *explodes!*" Pamela paused. "Not that I kiss anyone else much."

"Have you had any sort of quarrel?"

"No," Pamela said, "but a disagreement. You see, I've been thinking of these things—it all really began the night we were all here. I saw how splendid you were—alone. And I've been reading things, and I decided, Gee! I didn't want to be tied down! And I told Ralph so. He was pretty surprised. I told him that I didn't want to *marry* him. You see?"

Joan nodded.

"I hate it, being a virgin. Ralph is too. Oh yes. Well, and I thought each of us ought to *know* before we marry—something about all this. I don't mean just being messy. But I did think Ralph and I ought to live together first. I told him so. Gee! He was shocked!"

"What are you going to do?"

"I won't marry him. I've been thinking maybe I ought to live with other people, too. You do, don't you? Isn't that better? And when I told Ralph that, why, Joan, he was *terrible!* He almost hit me. I wish he had. Maybe now I'm not so sure about the others. But I won't marry Ralph."

"Now wait a moment," Joan said, thinking hard. "Let's get this straight."

Apparently much had been moving in the mind of Pamela. For many years, all the time she was in school, she had dissipated her surplus energy by a shaggy, an enthusiastic, and an indiscriminate rush toward dozens of boys; usually almost as if she were a boy herself, dancing, flirting, swimming, in a perfectly unamatory fashion; in such a way that her wild coldness became an extraordinarily attractive as well as integral part of her character. And then she found all her friends were marrying. Ralph

was there. She was a little tired of all these parties and she was very fond of Ralph. And, well, she would marry Ralph. That was really how it had happened. And now Ralph wasn't able to absorb, naturally, all the energy which Pamela had hitherto scattered to forty people; and *he* wanted to marry. There could be no question of anything but marriage. Pamela agreed automatically—until she began to see how Joan lived.

"This puts rather a responsibility on me," Joan said.

"Well, aren't I right?" Pamela demanded.

"I don't know," Joan confessed, slowly.

"You ought to."

"Have you talked to father?"

"Oh no."

"I want to talk to Ralph," Joan decided.

Well, this did rather put it up to her. She knew now that chastity too long maintained was dangerous; but to tell Pamela so and confirm Pamela's own doubts was something else again. Hers *was* a question of marriage, fundamentally; this spurt was transient and she would forget it in a month. But Joan knew how violent Pamela's momentary divagations could be. If Ralph refused her now, and stuck stubbornly to marriage, why, Pamela might really get herself into rather, well, rather unpleasant complications. Joan thought of the kid, thought of her visually in some circumstances she had known; she winced. It would be very hard for her to tell any daughter she might have in future years what she thought about these matters! How stupid it was to give advice—to be honest it was necessary to stick to a theory—yet the theory *didn't* seem to fit people like Pamela. The trouble was, the kid could never get innocence back again; and experience could come any time. "I'm a villainous sentimentalist," Joan thought. For really

the issue was quite sharp. In a much less intense way Pamela was facing the exact issue she had faced with Phil, subtly shifted about, with a different high-light emphasized, with the angle turned. Well, then, she should tell Pamela she was right not to marry. Yes. That is, if she applied strictly what she believed to be true from her own experience. But maybe everybody had to find these things out for himself.

"I don't know why I'm telling you all this," Pamela said, after another long explanation.

"I'm glad you are."

"Joan, I've been so curious about you—living alone this way. What did happen? What *have* you been doing?"

Hello! Here was an idea. Tell Pamela *exactly* the whole story of her adventure.

Joan walked to the window. "I'll tell you a story." She began.

At the end Pamela said, "Well, it was a good story."

It was almost eight when she left. "I'll think about it," she said. "Gee! you're swell, Joan." For the first time in years Pamela darted to her and kissed her. Joan crookedly smiled. After all, there was barely three years' difference in their ages. But between nineteen and twenty-two was more than just three years.

"I won't lecture anybody," Joan said. "You've heard me; it's your own choice."

"Well, you've said only one thing really important," Pamela said. "Putting it the way you did, I suppose it's true I am in love with Ralph." She was half way down the steps. She stopped, turning. "Then what does it matter?" she said indecisively.

Joan followed her; she hadn't put out the shop lights. "It matters quite a lot if you're not going to marry him."

"But I *want* to marry him," Pamela insisted, "afterward."

"You're crazy," Joan called. "Well, be good." She watched Pamela down the street. She tidied the shop for the night.

She had a quick dinner and then decided she must see Ralph for a brief conversation as soon as possible.

VI

Joan read the paper every morning, and thought back—*could* it be only a year and a half before?—when she and Philip had chased assignments together, and she had traced eagerly in the paper the embroidery in his stories, because, having been with him, she knew the facts. The papers all seemed much the same. Out of the inferno of the Loop arose still a funnel-shaped cyclone of noise and dirt; tossed by winds from the lake, bitten by smells from the west, it drifted over the city, pieces of it precipitating downward, dropping off and striking the ground in successive explosions; that was what news was. Here was a fire like that one they had seen and here some killings by machine-gun; here yet another gunman's funeral with ten thousand dollars' worth of roses piled high over the thirty thousand dollar solid silver casket; here again comic interviews and police forays, scandals in court and corruption in administration; great trials, great perjuries; color and brilliance; ardor and ruin.

Joan looked up from the paper, thinking these things and remembering Philip, and then caught herself realizing that she had not been thinking of Philip at all; that memories brought no emotion except curiosity; that his old power over her indeed was gone. She did not feel any negation of emotion, simply an absence of emotion.

What was more, now she could explain her feeling. She had progressed from the simple reaction of the week before; now she understood. The reason why she and Philip failed came to her completely. Philip was the lonely man, the man fighting his own way, untrammelled, unburdened: getting what he would out of life by his own powers; willing to sacrifice nothing to emergence by himself. And she was a marrying woman, a girl who wanted family and home, who was complete only when a man completed her; who had found joy, it was true, in revolt, but that joy was tinged with bitterness that the revolt had not been her own free choice, but the necessity of events; who was strong enough—now in the end—to surrender, search some one else. Yes, that was all there was to it. Philip was a prowler. She wasn't.

And he was behind her for good. Evidently there *was* such a thing as recovery—after all.

VII

And who should wander along but Shirley Northway?

"I saw the sign. I came in," Shirley said.

"It's good to see you!"

She had been away in Oregon for several months, doing a civic memorial.

"I'm a business woman," Joan explained.

"Fancy!" said Shirley.

Joan showed her around the shop, very proudly, and it happened to be a very crowded hour, so that they were interrupted continually. Georgiana was in the back room, dating up the tardy accounts. Shirley was impressed, but not quite seriously.

"This *is* a serious business," Joan asserted. "I could even lend you money."

Shirley was wearing a very dark green dress with the collar close caressing the throat. As usual, she wore no hat, and looked, Joan thought, entrancing.

"Really, I've been having fun," Joan pointed out. "And wait till you see my studio!"

The library was booming. She was a success. Shirley followed her upstairs for tea.

"And aren't you lonely?"

"Yes," Joan admitted.

"I'm the only girl I know who isn't lonely," Shirley said.

"How do you manage it?"

Shirley smiled and shrugged. No, there was no sign of Richard yet. As for Joan, she felt curiously, perversely lonelier, now that the ghost was gone.

Asking advice, Joan mentioned Pamela. Shirley was not inclined to take the Pamela matter seriously.

"I think I put it straight, seeing Ralph," Joan explained. She had told Ralph what to do.

Shirley was more interested in Joan's own adventures. Joan said a word or two.

"You're being rather proud of yourself, aren't you?" Shirley commented. "Me, I don't have many lovers. I'm a monogamist. So are all of us. That's what we're here for."

"Me, too!" Joan exclaimed. "But ——!"

Shirley conceded the point—"Sure."

Joan was surprised; she had thought Shirley was—how should she put it?—certainly not loose, but just as certainly quite—free.

"Of course I am," Shirley scoffed.

Joan rather blandly tried to defend, unnecessarily, what she had been doing; she used words like "reaction" and phrases like "diving deep."

"Nonsense!" Shirley said. "You're just being normal."

"I wonder," Joan pondered.

"Or," Shirley added, "you're just trying to catch up."

Joan looked up quickly. That *was* true. That had silently been in her mind—the notion of reaching equality with these people, more experienced, who were leaving her behind.

They had dinner together, Shirley lazy and lovely (Joan thought), and Joan very valiant (Shirley thought) and young.

"But don't forget," Shirley said at the end, "loving people—lots of people—may be normal, but just the same we're monogamists, you and I. I know. And I imagine you're going to step out of all this quite soon."

Joan didn't know whether or not to admit she hoped so.

VIII

Sometimes she thought of Macmillan and Fitzhumber. Certainly she had treated both of them very badly. But she had been quite out of her mind those months. They must have understood she had *had* to flee. As to the rest of it, she only regretted now that she had not brought proper joy to herself, to them; for joy was a very precious thing. A little shamefacedly she picked out two lovely books, rare and precious books, and sent one to Macmillan, one to Fitzhumber; she couldn't explain, really, why she wanted to send them presents.

What had moved her from one man to another? Desire. Of course. Pleasure. But the deeper desire had been and the more acute its satisfaction, then also more deeply and acutely came a positive necessity to advance; the more intensely she felt pleasure the more intense was her sense of waste and abandon. This helped, too, to explain why

she had left home. It wasn't outrage that had made her go, but instead a sense of shock that her father had had courage to do something which she hadn't done. Added to this was a curious feeling of shame and fright that indulgence had entered her house and that she could not return until she had indulged, too.

Of course by this time her life was very quiet. Once a week she went home—every Sunday—to dinner. These visits had been arranged the night the Tilfords came to see her.

"It's understood then—dinner once a week," Mr. Tilford had said.

"Yes."

"That's a compromise for me."

"For me too," Joan replied, rather airily. But really it was fun to drive up every Sunday, give a shout from the car, and dine with the whole family around her, Mrs. Pomeroy bustling and Sarah beaming. Meanwhile the other evenings she was happy. A little lonely, sure. But there was a lot of reading she was eager to do.

And once a week or so Corcoran came around. He was devoted to her, and certainly she adored him. He was so good. He was big and clever and honest, but most of all he was good; and usually he arrived with sprays of flowers or charming words for her clothes or some tiny, ridiculous gift he fetched laboriously, twinkling and shy, from an inner pocket. He designed the new shelves in the bookstore, and helped to make them. He never mentioned Philip or Martin. Sometimes Joan thought her detestation of that girl Martin was the most bitter thing in her life, and the presence of Martin—the few times they had crossed paths—an influence in her life purely unreasonable. As for Corcoran, she was glad for him because he was the best of all these men she had met.

Very suddenly she dropped all the others. Shirley was right: promiscuity was a sorry business. What she wanted was pleasure, the pleasure which came with sympathy and understanding and beauty. What she wanted, too, was love.

The others she summarily dismissed. A young man once telephoned. He argued. Joan said coldly into the telephone: "Did I? Well, yesterday isn't today—good-bye!" She remembered that evening they had painted the studio walls. Gee, there had been three men there, and she had had all three of them. How would they have felt, had they known! Heavens! She flushed. Well, no more nonsense of *that* sort. "I'm through with being a bum," she said to herself. And alone most of the time, direct and unequivocal, keeping to her word so that she forgot her word was given, she lived throughout her first winter in the flat, through Christmas again, into another spring.



Chapter Eight



I

JOAN walked into the outer room from her desk, and of course, even with his back turned, she knew him. There he was, smoke rising in a slow spiral from his pipe, his narrow black head neatly brushed, the edge of a colored stiff collar marked against his neck—Willard. She put out her hands and watched him slowly turn, a smile breaking into his eyes under the meeting dark brows.

He was a straw. She clung.

II

She did like him. Rather! She looked back to college, when she had been in love with him; he himself had been at fault those days for not having behaved so that she recognized the emotion in herself. Well, Willard hadn't changed. He was comfortable, always agreeing with her, and was apt to wear collars of a different color from the shirt. He did not speak of love. But he was curious about her, because, last having seen her two summers before during the Philip episode, he did not know yet how it had turned out; it was overwhelmingly obvious that he wanted to know if they had lived together. Joan didn't say much, but she told him quickly that they had

not. He was immediately relieved, and she wondered if he could have in his mind those dark, ignorant jealousies which the year before had misled and tortured her.

Willard approved highly of the shop. He was on vacation, using these weeks to slip in some graduate research at Rush; but in his spare time he was invariably at the shop, gravitating thither exactly as during school days he had gone the long distance north to the Tilford house. Very soon, astonishingly soon, he became a definite part of the atmosphere of the shop, as he had been part of her atmosphere in those older days; he had an odd faculty of making himself important. Even in absence. He was gone several days running without warning, and she missed him.

Willard was teaching at Stanford. He liked the job, and had a good deal of time, naturally, for research; he said he had not done anything real or original so far, but that some day he might have a lucky streak; meanwhile he was working hard. He had gone to Stanford after the break with Joan in 1924; had not seen her then till on his way to Hopkins during the Philip episode; now he thought a little work in Chicago, at Rush, might be a good thing.

Then in the month that followed they grew close. He never stirred toward her. But Joan felt an amazing thing was happening, she was falling in love with him. She did not know for how long, or how strongly; but what she felt was something deep, stirring and genuine. Willard, however, was rather calmer than usual. He did not appear excitedly interested. He came every day, and they walked or had tea, but that was all. Perhaps he wasn't in love with her any more. Joan wondered. She did not know. But she wanted the doubt cleared from her mind more than anything.

III

They were in her studio room upstairs.

"Your leg is a lot better," she thought aloud.

"Yes,—the operation helped. I told you, at Stanford they operated on me. Still, I'll never be good for anything really active."

"In a year you'll be running hurdle races."

"No." He saw concern on her face. "Oh, sorry."

She had just closed the shop and Willard had limped with her up all those stairs so that they could smoke quietly before going out somewhere to dinner; it was the first time he had been upstairs and it was fun showing him her things.

"Hello! What a picture!"

"Fitzhumber gave it to me."

"Oh yes—the photographer."

"I worked for him."

"Oh yes—I remember—you told me."

Of all things this year, she really regretted only one; those few times, coffee cup in hand, buckles on her slippers, she had posed. Why object to posing? She shrugged. But people did. She did.

Willard liked the stairway bookcase.

"By George!" he was saying, "How splendid this place is—all the things you have here. No wonder you left home."

"There were lots of reasons."

She was lying almost full length on the big black divan; her head just tilted upward, supported by the wall; her legs, bent at the knee, hanging down. She was utterly comfortable. Willard was talking quietly, and it was

the kind of nice talk where it doesn't matter if you don't really listen.

"I sha'n't stay long, though," she heard herself say. "I'm going to Europe in summer—I've really made up my mind."

"Oh."

Joan nodded.

"What happens to the shop?"

"Georgiana can run it."

"I'm sorry you're going."

"Why? You'll be in Stanford, won't you?"

"Yes—but ——"

The smoke was flattening along the ceiling.

"Oh," he cut off, "sorry."

Now he was talking eagerly again about work and books, centrifuges and autoclaves.

"Of course if I ever *do* isolate that alpha principle ——"

She did like him. He ought to be taken care of.

"You'll win a Nobel prize before you die, Willard."

"No."

"I'm sure."

"Really, Joan—you have faith?"

"Of course."

"Well, I'm not going to die for a long time—I have forty years."

"What a ghastly thought," she heard herself whisper.

"What?"

"Nothing."

He was walking around the room, first fingering the copper vases and turning them against the light, then prodding the rugs with his drawn toe; he came across the gray Paisley which Macmillan had given her.

"Where'd you get it?"

"Man named Macmillan—but of course—Hugh Macmillan—you know him."

"No."

"He's a great friend," Joan said. "We'll go over there some day."

She noticed he tautened at names when she mentioned them; this was a wicked and detestable habit, she thought, the kind of random jealousy for which there was no excuse; therefore she had no mercy, she mentioned names any time they were naturally in her mind.

"I haven't seen your father. Where is he?"

"I don't know," said Joan. "Maybe out of town. I haven't phoned for several days."

"He travels a good deal."

"He's living with Hilda Jacobsen," Joan said.

"Good Lord!"

"Well, why shouldn't he? He's of age."

"Your father—good Lord!"

"Willard, don't be ridiculous."

She was too lazy to move, with a perfect distillation of comfort over her; even when in conversation certain dissonances were felt, she thought they did not matter, she did not care. It was almost spring again and spring was in her blood once more; again she watched the sun flashing a new obeisance to the pageant of the seasons.

"I'm going to have an omelette for dinner," she thought, absently.

"Where shall we go?"

"Oh, did I tell you, I did like the Coppard book!"

Joan saw a squat robin just outside the window-pane. Willard was humming and pacing still.

Suddenly he knelt on the divan next to her, leaned over, and kissed her hard, full on her upturned mouth. She did not move. He jumped up and paced the room wildly,

and then, returning, he knelt again beside her, whispering, "Joan, once more—for the last time I think—will you marry me?"

"Well ——" she rose.

IV

The first shock to herself was that she didn't immediately say no. What about it, then?

Now—should she? She *liked* Willard. Oh, but she was sick and tired of defending herself to herself by using that word "like"—never would she use it again. Well then, did she love Willard? Ye-es. No. Ye-es. Of course it was a different kind of love. She had loved really just once in her life and with such intensity that love might not come again; yet by that intensity she was forced to measure other growing loves. But—this business of love—did it matter?

After all, passion was a pretty poor basis for marriage; wouldn't she have ever so much more chance of happiness tied to some one whom she was fond of, who was in his turn deeply in love with her? Wasn't that a better balance? As to everything else, they would be certainly happy; she liked his work and his amusements; he liked hers; they wouldn't have to worry about money and he could chase his darned alpha bug; as to little mannerisms in him which distressed her, they would disappear very quickly. Then it was possible—she would do it—Dr. and Mrs. Willard Bates—Joan Bates.

But now—a moment. She thought of marriage definitely as a permanence. She wanted children and she wanted to marry once and for all. Was it fair to herself, was it fair to Willard, to go into this thing—as really she was going into it—simply in reaction, simply

because her life seemed so blank in futurity that anything was better than this present uncertainty. Was it fair? But wait—it wasn't just reaction—she did want Willard. Still—oh Lord!—she should want him *more*—something should be *singing* in her now!

She knew a little now about men and mannishness; her old ignorances were gone. She knew that her old private idea of feminine equality was blasted; once she had even thought, in marital affairs, of actual feminine predominance—stupid notion! She knew now that the woman had really surprisingly little to do as far as leadership was concerned; in the end the man always controlled a love affair, and since this was true she wanted a man who would control it *well*. What an enormous denial it was to every notion of feminism which ever existed, every silly bit of pother about rights and equality, that the woman, in these things, was beneath.

And now—Willard—oh, the devil!—why did she always start pondering this way?—in the old days she hadn't pondered. How simple life had been. But she couldn't stand much longer, even with the shop, even with the studio, this day-to-day blankness, nothing ahead of her, very little behind. It was best to get out of it somehow. What was the matter with her, brooding so? It would be a quite perfect match. Her father would approve. Joan's face darkened. Everybody would approve. Why not?

v

Sometimes just before sleep there were dreams.

What was this secret passion? This desire for some vast purple hurricane of words, for some forbidden altar of abandon?

She wanted some one to talk like a poet about streets twisted and knuckled like fingers; she wanted some one to take her and overcome her cruelly and say, "This is the madness I want!"

She hid her face, she put her arms around the covers.

VI

For a week Willard didn't mention his proposal, nor did Joan; then one afternoon he called at the shop toward half-past five, grave and dragging his foot only very slightly; there were a few customers still there and she left them to hold out her hand, smiling welcome. For some reason she had been paying very close attention to her clothes this week. Today she was in a trim tan pull-over sweater; her eyes were brilliantly blue under her square black hair, and she was aware in the sweater how her body curved.

Willard came straight up to her and they fell back toward the second room.

"Now," he said, "let's have it. It's a week—long enough. What about it?"

"I've got to talk to you first. I'll let you know tonight."

The man to whom she had just given a copy of *The Crock of Gold* was looking at them curiously.

"I won't wait," Willard said.

She wrapped the book but forgot to put the money in the cash register.

"Come on back," Joan said. "Georgiana, take care of things, will you?"

The other girl was getting out the dust covers. It was almost closing time. Joan led Willard into the office.

"It's yes—my dear—isn't it?"

"I think so."

He was standing over her. Luckily, no one was in this last room. "Thank God!"

He leaned over to kiss her.

"I love you. Thank God."

"Sssh! Willard! Those people there!"

"To hell with them."

She was confused and didn't know what she said—something like, "Lovely of you"; through all her body was an awful fear because now, here *was* a climax; she couldn't play fast and loose with Willard. Careful—get it straight——

"Thank God!"

"Joan—how much is this first edition of the *Three Black Pennies*?"

"Four seventy-five," Joan said.

"Thank God," Willard was muttering.

"Georgiana, is it six yet? Throw everyone out and close the shop, please." She turned to Willard. "You've heard me. Maybe it's yes. I said I wanted to talk first. You can back out if you want to—after dinner and we've talked a little. Otherwise—yes."

"Thank God!"

"I'm really rather happy," Joan looked up at him.

VII

They stayed in the back room after Georgiana and the second girl had left; the front of the shop was dark and they saw piles of books under gray covers looking like small fantastic pianos; outside in the lighted streets figures shadowily flitted.

"It's so wonderful," Willard was saying. "I'm quite out of my mind with happiness. Hurt you? My darling—

sorry! It's such an unbelievable miracle—to have you—you!"

"Hush," she whispered.

"It makes me so glad about so many things. Now it does seem actually that I've been directed toward you all my life. That's the only way I can explain this curious——" he broke off. "It's rather rare, I suppose—I'm proud of it now. You see, Joan, I'm chaste."

"What?"

Good Lord! not really. So that was it, the strange lack she had always felt in him! So that was it—all these difficult years in Willard—*that!* Well, certainly two years ago she would have accepted it as something that went without saying, she would have been happy and pleased and proud. But now—it was rather ghastly.

"I'm a chaste man, Joan," Willard said, quietly. "I dare say that's rare nowadays. I often was sorry. I'm no Puritan—it wasn't any special moral principle—just something—but by George! how *glad* I am—now! To come to you—clean!"

"It was chastity I was going to talk about," she whispered carefully.

"Well, I'm doubly glad, then, that I mentioned it. Oh, my darling! If *that* was what worried you ——"

"No," she said, almost inaudibly, "you misunderstand."

"Well"—he was gay—"what does it matter—now?"

"I don't know."

He leaned forward. "What was that? I didn't hear you."

"Nothing."

"Everything is perfect now."

"Old Willard," she put a hand on his shoulder. Good Willard, nice Willard.

This was the most *dreadful* thing—what was this busi-

ness of virginity that it was always crucial in her life? Here she was now, and would have to talk to him as Philip had talked to her; she would have to hurt him exactly, exactly as Philip had hurt, had almost killed her.

What could she do? It was going to be hard enough to tell him, anyway, but of *course*, she had assumed quite without thinking that her confession would not deeply matter because he, too, surely would have things to confess; he was mature enough to understand and would agree with her, these things were unfortunate, but had to be overcome; that in the end they did not matter. But now—it was impossible to tell him. *What* to do? Well, she would never tell him. Of course not. Never. And this meant, since it was evidently so important to him, that she would feel a cheat all her life, and cringe whenever he spoke of secret things.

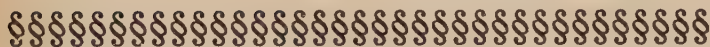
"It's all settled, then?" He was pressing close. "You're going to marry me?"

A final bubble of confused spite rose in her and burst.

"Yes!" she almost snapped. "Yes!"



Chapter Nine



I

WILLARD wanted to marry at once. Joan wanted to wait a few months. They argued, and then she suggested a curious compromise. She would marry him in a month—at the end of thirty days—provided that during the space of that month they should not see each other. Willard shook his head, frowning. Joan was insistent.

"It's a fine idea," she explained. "You have a lot of work to clear up at Rush; you'll do it badly if you're here all the time."

"Can I write?"

"Why, sure—but ——"

"It's an awfully queer notion, Joan."

"Not at all—it's really a *good* idea. After a month we'll be doubly fresh and eager."

He finally agreed.

She sighed in relief. Now.

II

There was a young man named Morton; she liked him very much; he lasted a few days.

There was Corcoran again, and poor Cork terribly black to see her going, to think of her going away, marrying.

There was a painter in one of the studios next door; he had been pursuing her a year; she did not particularly like him.

There was—but no—no ——

She was inexplicable to herself. Why take out on poor Willard the increment of an old hurt from Phil? Why set against Willard's record a contrasting record of her own? She did not know. But it was necessary finally to drive away out of her all desire for this thing, to *drive* it out. If in process she was debased—what of it? She felt herself bewitched, loathing that to which she was impelled, fascinated with horror at what she did.

Of course she could never tell Willard. Heavens!

III

She turned out the shop lights, drew a curtain over the windows, emptied the cash from the drawer—she had been at the shop a good many months now and never yet had succeeded in balancing the petty cash—and climbed, a little tired, upstairs. She flung off her clothes and in negligée squatted at one corner of the big divan, smoking, rather grim. Well, she was through now—how long before the month was up? A few days, three or four. It didn't matter. Hello! A knock! What a deliberate knock! Who could it be?

She slipped into a wrap and then went to the door, opening it slightly.

Her father was there.

"Well, well!" said Mr. Tilford.

IV

Joan was delighted to see him. But she couldn't help but think, suppose he had chanced in last night at this time! The thought so unnerved her that for a moment she was completely blank and at a loss; she started to chatter and then stopped abruptly. Still terrified in retrospect, she hardly noticed her father's cool, gentle kiss, and his face, exceedingly stern; and the first thing she heard him say was:

"Joan, you've had enough, you're coming home."

"No, father."

"Why not?"

"I don't want to."

"If necessary I shall drag you home."

"Father!"

"If necessary I shall *spank* you and drag you home."

"Father—please ——"

"There's utterly no sense in your living here alone. I have been hearing things. I am sick and tired of all this. I am ashamed of myself and for the first time in my life I am ashamed of you. Now—you are coming home. You are leaving all this"—he pointed vaguely, with distaste edging his mouth—"behind you. Now. Come."

Joan was trying to think.

"All my life," continued Mr. Tilford, deliberately, "I have tried to bring you up very liberally and sanely. I brought you up almost as if you were a boy—as I myself would have liked to have been brought up. I have thought of you often actually as if you were that son I wanted so badly to have. And I dare say I was wrong. I gave you too much free rein. You've always done ex-

actly what you wanted to do. You've been a spoiled, willful child. These last years, anyway. You've been lenient and casual with yourself. I don't think any damage has been done yet. But I sha'n't take any more risks. I've been too lenient myself, too. I have been mistaken and it has been my fault. And now it is time to change. I am your father and I have certain responsibilities. I love you. And now almost for the first time in my life I am ordering you to do something and you will obey. You are coming home."

She started up and turned away; Mr. Tilford followed her implacably.

"I know what you're going to say—that you left home because of me."

"No," Joan said, "that was an excuse, not a reason."

"However that may be, I am the impulse driving you off. I admit that freely. I am freely admitting my errors and faults; you must be fair and admit yours also. When you left first I was hurt, but I hid that. I tried to applaud you. I thought you were doing a wise and courageous and a rather fine thing. I could see myself—as a youth—doing likewise. And I didn't lose my own sense of values. Whether you were home or away could make no honest difference regarding Hilda and me. It did, though." Mr. Tilford paused. "But we'll go into that later. What I am saying now is that you have evidently lost your own sense of values. You have been trying an experiment and now all virtue has gone out of that experiment. There is no point to keeping up this—this escapade any longer. I am sorry to be so stern. But I mean every word I say. You are doing now not what is right, but what is wrong. And it's over. You are coming home."

"What if I refuse?"

"I shall drag you."

"Father!"

"I shall."

"I refuse," Joan said.

"Maybe you're curious why I came along tonight. I came last night, too."

"Oh," Joan said.

"I came along really just to say hello. You weren't home last Sunday. I came late, after dinner, about ten o'clock, and when I climbed the stairs, just before knocking I heard voices. I listened a moment and then I came away again. I didn't want to intrude. Now mind you, I'm not trying to exaggerate certain possibilities of this situation. But that you see people so oddly and unconventionally is a reflection both upon yourself and upon me. It was in the first place incredibly wrong of me to have behaved so that you felt forced to run away. It is in the second place just as wrong for you to behave so that I must fetch you back. Well, that's a closed circle. And you're coming."

"No."

"Joan." He paid no attention to her interruptions, and was talking more slowly and easily now: "After all, Joan, I've lived in the world longer than you, and I know it better. How you children must hate hearing your elders say that! But it's true. And I know that a—a reckless pursuit of reaction very seldom leads anywhere. Let me tell you something. You remember when your mother died?" Jean nodded. "I smashed all my life up."

"My life isn't smashed up."

"Listen."

And she listened with interest; not for years had her father talked about Rosalind. He described how he suffered, knowing that she didn't love him as he loved her,

how nevertheless that feeling brought fuel to his love; he was forever trying to adduce new manifestations of love in an effort to make her respond. She died. Well, Mr. Tilford said, leaning back and staring beyond Joan, he had gone to pieces. Did she know anything about that year of his? No one did. He had gone around the world—of course she knew that?—she nodded—and in many diverse and deliberate adventures had sought solace. And he failed. He came back shaken and tired and all the heartbreak over Rosalind was still there. Adventure hadn't healed him. Time did. Time and honest thought.

"You failed because your adventures were deliberate," Joan suggested. "Mine weren't."

"Are you sure?"

She thought back to Corcoran and the people before Corcoran. She wasn't so sure.

"I'll tell you all about that year of mine, in detail, some day. Not now."

"I'd like to hear."

"Now you are coming home."

"Dad, I'd like you to say frankly, after all what *is* the matter? What have I done?"

"Nothing very terrible, I'm sure."

"Well, maybe so," Joan said, soberly. "*I* don't know. I've been quite happy. But tell me. Suppose I were a boy. You've said you brought me up like a boy. Would you mind if a boy had adventures? I'll be blunt. Sexual adventures."

Mr. Tilford paused. Then he shook his head.

"The cases aren't comparable."

"I think they are."

"You can't put logic in these things. The cases aren't comparable."

"You're a lawyer and ought to know," said Joan, "but I don't agree with you."

"My child," Mr. Tilford said, "I don't want to be harsh. But think a moment. Suppose some day you have a daughter."

She stopped. She thought how difficult it had been to be honest even with Pamela.

"If you and Hilda live together," Joan said, "frankly I don't see why I shouldn't live with some one—if I want to."

"The cases are different. Hilda and I—I don't mean to be a prig—are in love."

"Yes," she admitted.

"I wouldn't have done anything overt," Mr. Tilford said, slowly, "if you'd gone off with Philip. But this"—he pointed around him—"is quite a different thing."

"I haven't said I liked all of it," she protested. "I'm not defending myself."

"It doesn't matter if you do or not. You're coming home."

"Dad, it *wasn't* outrage at you and Hilda that made me go. No! Really. About you and Hilda, I approved, really I did. I went, in fact, because you had been brave enough to do something which I hadn't been brave enough to do. You see? I've always wanted to tell you that. I couldn't bear to talk, though—for so long. I left home in revulsion against my own silliness."

He nodded rather sharply.

"And," said Joan, "for the fact that I was silly, that I didn't have courage, I hold you responsible."

"How so, Joan?"

And she poured out to her father almost the whole secret motivation of her recent life, and what it taught her as she looked back now to her youth. Always this

heritage of fathers! Philip's father was mad; here was her own father, too sane. "And you instilled into us that ideal of pitiless fidelity to some obscure standard of conduct," Joan said, intently. "Oh yes, you did, father; you were free and easy, yes, but always back of it was that feeling—that *necessity*—of conduct. By conduct I don't mean just morality. It was all a complex of tradition and heritage and fastidiousness and honesty. And it was fine—of course. Gee!" She clenched her fist and bounced it on her knee. "Remember what a funny kid I was? And Pamela, too? We were both so *fine*. Well, and now I think maybe we'd be happier today if we had been less fine. I do, really, father. I do think the most appalling things now. All this revolt of mine—that's a silly word—has been so violent because I was so traditional for so long. When I remember myself—two or three years ago! And what a *baby* I was—when Philip came along. If only I had known a little more! And now, after Philip, why, all that old fineness has been working itself out of me. Do I hate what I've been doing? Well, no, I don't. But—oh, it's all so helpless——" Joan broke off. And she added, half bitterly: "And all your fault. You were so worthy." She looked at him, still bitter. "Oh, I know you did what you thought was right—sure. Maybe it was right. Maybe I'm crazy. I don't know."

She drooped a moment, immobile.

"Why," she went on, "about marriage. Lord! Why were we all taught that there was only black and white? The way I felt about marriage! And yet I suppose—if I do have a daughter—I suppose I'll tell her the same old things. It seems to be life that you can't benefit others by your mistakes. Or that some secret cruelty or sentimentality in you makes you want other people to go

through the same things you go through, and make the same helpless, silly, tragic errors. I suppose you're right. I'll tell my daughters everything you told me. But it does seem so useless. It does seem such a waste."

"We've talked enough. My dear Joan, you're coming home."

"No."

Mr. Tilford reapproached her.

"This is the most tragic evening in my life," Joan said.

"My dear"—he was moving close over her—"there's nothing very important about this. Come home for a while—we want you ——"

"It is important."

"All the more reason, then, to come."

"Of course," she murmured, "I *want* to—really."

"Come."

"No."

"Joan, if necessary I shall drag you."

She shook her head.

"Joan."

"I'll fight you," she said.

He smiled slightly and grasped her arms. She struggled and in a moment they were both in an admixture of embrace, struggle, and miscellaneous contact, both of them in self-protection laughing. They laughed breathlessly and fought each other. They were on the divan now, and Joan, sobbing with laughter, tried to wrench free from her father's grasp on her arms. He was breathing very hard and kept laughing. She slapped him smartly and he blinked, tightening his hold. They rolled over together and suddenly she hurled herself against his chest, pulled his head down, and then devotedly, passionately kissed him. He stroked her shoulders and kept

his face to one side, averted. She kissed him hungrily and he kissed her on her shoulders, the top of her cheeks, her hair. Then Joan burst into a stream of sobs; she cried as if every muscle in her body would be strained and shaken; she cried so that after long moments she could not control herself and quivered, wishing that there were more tears.

"My darling Joan," he murmured, comforting her.

"Oh—father!"

"My dear, darling Joan."

"It's been such *hell*!"

"I know, my dear, my dear!"

"Father—I can't ever tell you."

"Don't."

"Oh—father—father!"

"Let's go home."

She packed nothing, but ran upstairs to huddle into a dress; they looked at each other once, then leaned together down the dark, circling stairs.

V

The next day they went to a baseball game together. It was good fun. They hadn't been to a baseball game together for years; it was a good game and the Cubs won, 4-3. The Giants were the losers; all their runs came in the third inning when Frankie Frisch smashed out a home run. Joan ate peanuts and her father was wearing a straw hat. There were empty pop-bottles rolling and knocking under their feet; the coach at first base certainly winked at her between innings, on his way to the dugout; the seventh inning came suddenly as a pleasant surprise and they stretched with everybody, watching the scoreboard.

She was glad the Cubs won. She had never been much of a Giant fan.

VI

They were at dinner alone together.

"My God!" Joan ejaculated, with extraordinary intensity.

Mr. Tilford stopped with a fork halfway to his open mouth.

"I can't believe it!" she exclaimed.

"What's the matter, dear?" He let the fork down cautiously.

"To think I'd forgotten!"

"Yes?"

"Dad, you'll have to get me out of something—maybe."

He waited patiently. "What *is* it?"

"Willard!" she exclaimed.

"Hello! Is he in town? Good fellow. I must see him."

"Gee!" exclaimed Joan. "I think I'm supposed to marry him tomorrow."

"What?"

She never saw her father rise like that before.

"Well, maybe not tomorrow. But I'm going to marry him."

"Joan!"

"Oh yes. I promised."

"I'm not sure that I approve, Joan."

She was still staring at herself.

"I like Willard immensely," he said, "but, Joan, my dear, is he for you? Do you love him?"

"Yes—in a way."

"Don't marry him," Mr. Tilford said.

"I've promised."

He shrugged. He actually looked frightened.

"I don't know what I'll do," she said, seriously. She drew her thumb under her chin. "Dad, your fish is cold." She began to eat again. She wondered.

VII

They had another long talk the next day, and for the first time Joan asked directly about Hilda. Then Mr. Tilford surprised her; he told her that he had not lived with Hilda while she, Joan, was away.

"What?" Joan stared. "Well!"

How beautiful it was, here at home; how fine to talk in the big library; how magnificent were her father's hands.

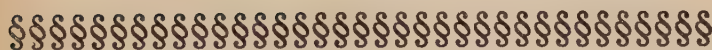
"But you will live with her now?" she suggested, in sudden inspiration.

"Perhaps—yes!" admitted Mr. Tilford, startled.

"Life is illogical, isn't it?"



Chapter Ten



I

HERE they were, summer was beckoning again, they were deep into 1927. Hymie Weiss was dead, like the great O'Banion before him; Mayor Thompson was getting ready to burn the English books along the lake-front; Mike Faherty promised once again to build a subway.

She stepped off the bus and walked from the corner toward the shop. She was usually a little late, having to come from all the way up north. There was a knot of people around a tree near the corner. Some one had just shot and killed a policeman. Joan got out her keys, entering the shop.

Sometimes she felt she was like a post driven deep into sand, with shallow water lapping around it. She was fixed somehow, she stayed; life eddied past, lapping but not shaking her; she was rigid and all about her were eddies of things passing. Philip was gone and Fay was gone; Macmillan and Fitzhumber were gone; Ralph and Pamela were gone; her father, too, in a way, and Hilda. Most of her more casual friends had scattered and it was a little awkward to rediscover them, so hard was it to bridge the gap and remember years before what they had talked about; and she loved no one.

She was busy in the shop and found a great parcel of French books just arrived from Paris. What a shame! They were marked nine francs, which was thirty-six cents; but of course if only for appearances she must charge at least \$1.50. Just now business was sagging before the impending summer slump. She had been running the shop as a library almost exactly a year now.

Well, a year was enough. She would move on now. Oh yes, they did have a copy of *The Hill of Dreams*—a moment please. Always there was something driving her, this necessity to progress. Why wasn't she satisfied with this jolly shop?—it meant real work; it was productive fun. Wouldn't other people be satisfied to wait? Oh—how she hated waiting!

She and Willard would go away together. Let him drop his work for a year. It would be good for him and she was feeling very greatly a desire to do something actually and tangibly for some one; and especially she wanted to be tremendously nice to Willard, she wanted to give him things, she wanted to recompense him now (she forced herself to explain secretly) for the hurt she would some day do him.

Yes, they would go abroad; soon it would be autumn and that would be a good time to start. They might go on, right around the world. Have calm, detached, and utterly absorbed moods, reflections, desires, in Ravenna and Cairo, Kashmir and Rangoon. She must get out her old atlas again. What was that—Georgian poetry?—yes, they had that splendid old 1913-15 volume. Get out the old atlas, and let them search for new place names. She thought a moment of the Golden Fleece. There was no use being bitter. But there was an ache in that old memory. Still—when Jason himself returned, the wool

was dulled, the golden sheen was gone, the Fleece had turned black. Hadn't it? Yes!

II

Reaction from the past weeks did a not entirely unexpected thing—it flung her almost headlong into the arms of Willard. She clung to him. The world was slipping past her; she wanted love. She wanted some one to laugh with at the dunes, some one to drop in at odd hours and adore her; some one who showed sympathy no matter what she did, and who understood, it seemed instinctively, no matter how she did it; she wanted desperately, these few quick weeks, to be comforted. And it was pleasant on her side to find pleasure in comforting him; here she was learning a platitudinous lesson that there were few things more likely to give happiness than ministering to the happiness of another. Willard clung too. And he was good. So *good*.

They agreed that, after all, Joan's first idea was best, and that they should wait six weeks or so longer, and marry in June. She had six weeks, then, and there was a great deal to do. She changed her mind and decided not to have an elaborate wedding, indeed a very simple ceremony would be best, with only a few friends to watch them. Willard agreed with her, and they went out together to buy each other clothes. They did not make formal announcement of the engagement. Mr. Tilford promised them a trip to Hawaii as a wedding present, and Joan, not having told anyone yet, was convinced, once as far as Honolulu, they could keep right on around the world. Let Europe come last.

Willard knew that Joan had gone through some sort of crisis this past month, but he did not ask any questions,

never said a word nor hinted; and she was grateful. In the end, too, she was just a little irritated, not so much at his lack of curiosity, because he was curious, but at his complacent assumption that he would understand her no matter what she had done, or even if she never told him. But that was a very minor thing. For the rest, he was perfect. He was in high spirits and had improved astonishingly in mental limberness, in sudden rare expressions of a very direct charm, even in the way he looked. He *looked* better. So did she. For the first time in months she would come across a mirror suddenly and like to look.

Of course she hadn't told him. She never would. She felt a cheat sometimes, she felt a liar and a pretender, especially in moments when he manifested acutely his superb, unquestioning confidence in her; but she could never tell him, it would hurt him too much. He might find out some day. But sufficient unto the day the evil thereof. And after all, her adventures in retrospect did not seem in the least awful to her, or a matter of shame to confess; they seemed in the nature of things, incidental, and of no consequence because so transitory; they were behind her and to a certain extent she regretted them, wherefore the best thing to do was forget.

They drove up to Ravinia a couple of nights a week to see the summer opera.

"I do think you're falling in love with me," Willard whispered.

"Maybe," she smiled, happy.

III

They were sitting in the library toward six o'clock an evening early in June. Mr. Tilford came in. He

smiled, took off his hat, and with the same gesture he employed three hundred days a year, in one motion slipped out of his coat, hung it on the rack, and put his folio of papers on the table.

"Hello, dad," Joan sang.

"How are you, children?"

The telephone tingled. Joan moved to answer.

She listened. Then with absolute white amazement on her face, her palm upward over her mouth, she turned to them. Her ear was still at the receiver.

"What's the matter?" Willard was half out of his chair.

"Heavens!" Joan exclaimed. She talked intently into the telephone and kept saying, "Yes, yes," after bursts of listening. She turned to the room. "It's Pamela," she said. "Pamela's married."

They tore into the car and rushed to the address Pamela gave. Now that they thought of it, no one had seen her for a day or two, but after long experience they were used to such adventures; they knew she'd telegraph soon from where she was. Pamela stood a little defiant, her cheeks flaming, at the doorway. Her hair was disorderly. Ralph looked very happy and concealed his first nervousness well.

They had been married the day before, they explained—rather suddenly. They were in a flat of almost microscopic dimensions in Evanston. Mr. Tilford asked what the rent was. Whew! The flat consisted of a room, a part of the same room which was the dining room, and a cupboard for a kitchen. There were seven lamps and two bathrooms. It was exquisitely furnished. There were seven hundred other flats, perfectly identical, in the same building.

"I've got some dinner," said Pamela, "if you're hungry." They all nodded. They were beyond speech.

"Cook? No indeed." Pamela laughed slightly. "I bought it all hot at the corner."

"Well, how are you?" Joan asked her, after dinner.

"Wonderful," Pamela said. But later she added: "I'm scared to death. Heavens! this is for life!" Joan was extraordinarily excited. And look at her poor father, still white. Of course he couldn't understand that they were just normal children; he still wanted them both to be ambassadors' wives.

"My dear," Joan bubbled to Pamela, "you're enchanting—you're beautiful!"

"Well," Pamela laughed again, "they always said I looked like you."

It was a good dinner except, Pamela explained, they had moved in only that morning and weren't really settled yet. Ralph had set the table and there was no salt.

"Get some salt!" Willard shouted. "Salt!"

Yes—that was true—life needed some salty contact, some saline astringent sharpening and tightening its web.

Pamela kept putting her hands through her hair, from the back, tipping it over her forehead. Ralph, once he dared face Mr. Tilford, had normal manners again, but Joan saw him twenty times moistening his under lip. The kids *were* nervous. Well, it was up to all of them to be reassuring, and congratulatory, and very gay. Mr. Tilford saw that too and shortly he was the gayest. He sent Louie back home for a bottle of wine. Ralph darted down to the corner to find some cakes. Willard, of course, was immensely impressed, a little dubious, on the whole pleased.

They were dodging in and out soon, drinking a little; just before they left, Joan chanced into the second room and Ralph and Pamela were there. Pamela was an elusive creature. You never knew where she was. But now, coming upon them, Joan saw a brown-rose blur. Ralph wore a dark-brown suit and Pamela was in that old-rose dress; they were immobile, standing attached and silent; they were like a silhouette perfectly composed of two halves, absorbed into one another so that separate personalities did not exist. Joan slipped out of the room. As she left she saw Pamela relax and then, turning upward, saw her eyes. Joan never forgot that kiss.

How queer that Ralph was evidently fire for Pamela, as Philip once had been for her—Ralph who hardly once in all the years she had known him had moved her a single quiver. It *was* mysterious, this force of personality, this chemistry of attraction. Joan, bemused, reached the outer room. She felt touched and wistful. The kid sister! Well, at last!

It was time to go. Mr. Tilford had evidently been numbed by this. He liked Ralph, and had approved their engagement, but apparently the factual shock of marriage had almost done him in. Except to people who knew him very well, no emotion except the appropriate one ever showed on his face. But Joan knew. She felt very close to him. On the way out, forgetting Willard, she walked beside him, pressing her hand around his arm, going down the stairs with him step by step. Pamela and Ralph stood at the top of the stair. Pamela was brilliant. Ralph looked rather beautiful himself. His Adam's apple still wobbled slightly. But that was because he wore those absurd soft shirts.

IV

The next few days Joan had an acute, violent fit of depression.

"What *is* the matter?" Willard kept asking.

One of the really very few things wrong about Willard was that he never knew by sharp imperative instinct when she wanted to be alone.

"I don't know. I just feel like hell."

"You'll get over it."

"Of course."

"We might take a long ride—or go to the theater?"

"No."

Of course, Joan reflected, Pamela's marriage was on *her* head. Well, wasn't it right for her to have married? Yes!

"But *I* did it," she kept reflecting.

She had gone to Ralph that day and told him exactly what mood Pamela suffered, and then had told him what to do. Scared, Ralph agreed. He was no actor and Joan had been a little worried—except that suddenly she had had her own affairs so acutely to worry about—for fear the plan might fall through. She *didn't* want Pamela messing around!

She had told Ralph to agree with Pamela, but in high-minded fashion to refuse to do anything "furtive." "Tell her you'll run away with her. Tell her you insist on running away with her. A formal, crazy, definite, dramatic, elopement. Insist on letters to father—and to your father—defending your right to freedom. Well," Joan had concluded, "say all that, and stick by it, and she'll marry you in two months."

Evidently it had worked.

But for other reasons—she couldn't explain them—she felt terribly depressed.

v

They were thinking about choosing a definite day now. Willard dropped into the shop. There was nothing different about him. He looked a little tired, that was all. She noted his slow, easy tread, and his smile, showing his teeth behind the pipe. By George! Joan was intently busy, trying to drown herself in work; she was going over the files with Georgiana, and giving Georgiana final instructions.

"Am I interrupting? Sorry!" Willard explained. "I should have phoned."

"It's all right," Joan said.

"No, you're busy. I'll go," he insisted. "I'll go. I have an errand around the corner. Back in half an hour."

About twenty minutes later she noticed that she had not noticed that he was gone.

And all of a sudden it came over her heartbreakingly that she could not marry Willard.

She knew why, too. He lacked something she badly wanted. There was no joy in him.

vi

"No, you've just got to forget me, that's all."

"I don't understand this."

"I don't either—altogether."

"What have I done? I'm the same. It was only a few nights ago—we went out to the south shore and you were so happy—yes you were—you kissed me ——"

Joan shook her head violently.

"What's happened? Have I *done* anything?"

"No, nothing's happened."

"But tell me."

"I'm just a liar and a cheat and a coward," Joan said.

"No!"

"The only decent thing I've done is finally be able to tell you before it's too late."

"No!"

"Oh, Willard—you don't know me. I'd have made myself so miserable after a while—and then you so miserable —"

"This is just a Mood," Willard said.

"I'm a liar and a cheat," Joan said. "I'm a bum."

"This is so unthinkable. I can't believe it."

"Just remember I've jilted you—listen to people—then forget."

"I don't give a damn about people," he protested. "Not a damn about people or what they say. It's you and me that count."

"I can't help it, Willard."

"I love you. You don't love me in the same way, I know. But you would have, sooner or later. Why, I could see it coming—these past few weeks. You think you can't give your life to me now, but, Joan, you would have grown into it—you would have found out how all right it would have been."

"No."

"But *why*?"

"I don't want to explain."

"You ought to be fair to me."

"I can't marry you, Willard. I feel just as I did when we talked about this when we were still in school. I don't love you."

"I'd better go."

"I'm just a liar and a cheat and a coward," Joan said.

"Please."

"Not that I've done anything wrong to myself. But I have to you."

"I suppose I'd better go."

Willard rose in a matter-of-fact way and clasped her hand. She did not want to look at him.

"Good-by."

"Don't think you're through with me." He tried to laugh. "If you do, you're wrong. I'll be back."

"Good-by," Joan had to say.

She saw him leave the shop. She thought of his revelation to her the night she promised to marry him. Really, something very dreadful might happen some day to Willard.

VII

Now summer was here—that was good—swim.

Her father was splendid these days and they were happy in the house together.

Yes, the merit of chastity, the becomingness of conduct—that was all exaggerated. But something was gone from her, something was gone.

The summer was hot. She went up to Montana for two months. She swam and hiked, and in the evenings read a good deal. Life was a pattern—all of it was good—everything was worth something else.

"Anyway, I'm through forever with any messiness."

A great shining hot sun. At dusk it looked as if some one was rolling an orange slowly toward the horizon. Boots to her hips and a rod flashing in the brown water. But she was not much of a fisherman. Camp at sundown, and the tall, languid gold of dreams.

VIII

Philip was a lonely cuss. Was he? He wondered. He was standing in the subway, roaring, jolting uptown. He was busy, he was in a hurry, he had a hundred things to do. What was this insatiable bug in his insatiable bean which drove him on? Some one's elbow crushed a rib. "The human race," meditated Philip, "should be exterminated." He smiled.

Nice to be busy and active again! After those ghastly two years. What had he felt like during those two years? Like a spot on the pavement. He had been run over by a steam-roller. Joan was a steam-roller. He flickered into a smile. No—hardly. Even a steam-roller could reverse. There was no reverse in Joan. That damned girl moved always forward.

Philip saw the stations rocket past and his meditations rocketed too. He was extraordinarily limber mentally these days; even when he was rushed—as on this infernal day—he could keep his confounded head in order. Virginia now. Virginia was a different sort of affair. Philip relaxed a bit, and even his eyes smiled. Nice to know some one smart to talk to, pleasant to watch, whom he didn't love, who didn't love him, to whom he made love, who made love to him. Lord! What would he do these days without Virginia? But nonsense! He'd do perfectly well. She wasn't important. No one was getting hurt in this small fleeting affair.

Wonder why he didn't see Fay any more? Maybe because she reminded him too much of Joan. Damned weakling he was. No. He wasn't. He reached the office. He tossed down his hat and saluted the decorous and busy room. It was quite different from the old local

room in Chicago. It was fairly quiet and one addressed the managing editor with the appellation "Sir."

"I have an assignment for you, Hubbard, tonight at seven."

Philip cut him off. "Sorry. I have a date. Can't possibly go."

The editor regarded him. Philip was bland and blithe.

"I'm crazy," Philip thought.

The editor called some one else. "You, Hubbard, have the courage of your lack of convictions." Philip breathed.

Indeed he had a date. Two young Englishmen were in town, and young Englishmen fairly fresh from Cambridge knew how to talk, and he was eager for good talk these days. How extraordinary it was to be eager again! And a year before he had been—what had he said?—a spot on the pavement. A lousy, dirty, blotted spot. And now! "Resurrection of the Spot," Philip announced to himself. "The Spot has been Reborn."

And what authority had produced this miracle? Philip pulled out his typewriter and did a short rewrite of an afternoon paper story for the early edition. Maybe it had been some realization of change in his concept of loneliness. He couldn't explain it all yet. Why explain? That was the trouble with people like Richard, they tried to explain too much. It had appeared that he could never be alone again. Joan's ghost would not free him. Oh, curse that girl! And he had loved her so! So was he a lonely cuss—any more? Maybe not.

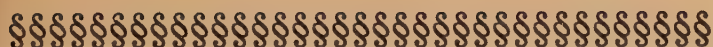
"Six hundred on the storm," some one was calling to him.

"All right." By golly!—next month that Function of Criticism piece came out, and he had promised the first half of the new book for November 1st. Well, he'd get it done; there was plenty of time, plenty! About loneli-

ness. What good was it, anyway? Philip chuckled, thinking that individuality fell down before one thing at least—copulation. Essentially that was another thing the importance of which was overwhelmingly exaggerated. Yet there was this absurd tassel of erectile and excitatory tissue demanding opportunity and satisfaction!—"Hubbard, where'd you get those shoes?"—But he was no rake. God knew.

These two Englishmen—good fellows. One of them, of all things on earth, was a pig-farmer, the other an art critic who knew all about Byzantium. And he must call up Short—that chap knew a lot—have lunch and get settled this business of the exact relation of increased blood pressure to those changes in the cortex which incited thought. Pavlov was the most exciting thing in the world. He would go to Russia to see Pavlov. He had heard the old boy knew Othello by heart and remembered personally seventeen thousand dogs. Philip tossed his copy on the table. "Going out for a haircut," he explained.

About Joan. He thought a moment of Joan. This was rare, nowadays. Wonder if he'd ever see her again. If he did, he had only one thing to say. Would he say it? Philip wondered.



Chapter Eleven



I

JOAN returned to Chicago in early autumn, refreshed and free. Actualities or ghosts, one and all they were behind her. Mr. Tilford drifted away for a week and came back suddenly; he hadn't telegraphed, and when she saw him climb from a taxi outside, she rushed down to greet him; and he seemed exultant. Well, she was exultant, too. There was something in his face. She watched.

He saw quickly she was eager to share this excitement, whatever it was; but, interrupting her, he put his fingers to his lips mysteriously, smiling. He looked a little older. His hair was almost perfectly gray now. More than ever, with his big bones and hard smooth skin, he looked like granite. And still his eyes were soft.

"Yes," he said after dinner. "I've got some news, Joan. I'm going to get married, Joan."

II

Hilda Jacobsen came on from New York the next day; Joan, with her father, waited at the station, and reached Hilda first. She embraced her and prevented for a moment any speech whatever.

"It's a family greeting, isn't it?" Hilda said.

"You bet it is," Joan smiled in return.

They put Hilda in the house and broke the news to Mrs. Pomeroy. Mrs. Pomeroy was off in new channels now; she was having diseases. She experimented with them cautiously and already had several favorites. The appendicitis operation the year before had been very pleasant, and meanwhile there was a vast amount of interest to be gained from this vague feeling in her thigh; yes, sciatica, the doctors said. Already Mrs. Pomeroy had one of the finest private collections of doctors ever seen in Chicago; next year she was thinking of specializing, not, after all, in abdominal ailments, as had been her first intention, but in what she called the upper neuralgias. When Joan told her about Hilda, she clasped her hands hard and said, repeating it: "Well, I never! Well, I never!" But with a decisive bob of her very carefully coiffed head she went down to congratulate Mark and to tell him to be a good boy. Of course she liked Hilda very much.

"But," she whispered to Joan when they were alone one afternoon, "you should see her lingerie! Scandalous, my dear!"

Hilda had not given up music, by any means; she and Mark, Joan heard, had searched for compromise, and after almost a year of uncertainty and disorder, during part of which, while Joan was away, he refused to see her (though Joan's absence wasn't the reason, he insisted), they managed somehow to find it; she was to give up teaching, which was a drain on her anyway, and live in Chicago the half-year that she wasn't giving concerts. Thus for six months each year she would travel, and Mr. Tilford, unable to be with her all the time, would manage to join her occasionally.

"This is going to be a very youthful marriage," Mr.

Tilford said; "I shall simply descend on you. I too have work to do."

He did not tell Joan by what final process Hilda had come to promise to marry him, and in fact Joan was inclined to think he didn't himself dare to investigate this miracle; but she thought she knew the reason. It must have been simply the realization to Hilda that here was some one who *loved* her. Some one who loved her so much and whom she loved so much that anything but marriage finally was out of the question. That—and perhaps some secret beauty in her heart which at the end made her want simply to give in.

Hilda was great fun in the evenings. She wore eccentric clothes, and it was always an amusement to try and forecast what outlandish, or magnificent, or on the other hand extremely simple gown she might be wearing; and then later more than amusement to watch her glossy hands and her very clear dark eyes as she talked reminiscently of her Danish childhood. Joan knew early she had temper, and liked that, too. Hilda was an artist, and a foreigner, and she brought them many points of view, incidents, memories, sidelights of character, which they welcomed as things delightfully new and strange.

"Like a plush bag," Hilda explained.

"A what?"

"You know—when some one says something dreadfully banal or painful—when a play is so crass or when a speaker forgets what he must say—you know, you want to hide your head—I have always thought into a plush bag."

"Oh, a *blush* bag!" Mr. Tilford laughed.

Joan shouted.

"We'll hang one on the chandelier," Mr. Tilford suggested.

Blush bag. That must stay with them.

And from them Hilda was learning so much. "I had no idea what a family could be. I have thought always it was something quite terrible. But it is not. God help me, now I too will become one of you—of you Americans."

"Tut tut!" countered Mrs. Pomeroy, who was very proud of Mark—young Mark she called him; she embarrassed him by pointed beams.

"No, I don't want to go out," Hilda said one night. "I like it here."

They were to be married in October. The announcement had been made.

III

Mr. Tilford wanted a quiet wedding, and Miss Jacobsen wanted an exceedingly brilliant one, and they fought bitterly for days.

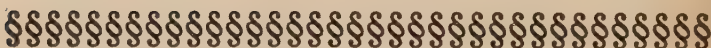
"What you want would cost five thousand dollars!" he exclaimed, aghast.

"Good," agreed Miss Jacobsen.

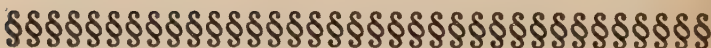
Joan watched them and was touched, and although she let them alone a good deal, she was always very sure to make it clear that she belonged to both of them, and both of them to her; and meanwhile she must really rehearse this shocking line, "Oh yes—Miss Jacobsen—rather, Mrs. Tilford. Yes, *the* Miss Jacobsen—my step-mother!"

They were of a height, Hilda slighter and more carved; she was older by not many years, and in fact under dim light or in some fleeting moods looked actually a little younger; and as for Joan, she felt she could not disguise herself as seventeen any longer. Now she looked eighteen at least. How old was she really? Mustn't tell!

Of course it was her father who was greatest fun to watch. Look at him! The dear! And how solemn he was, and how continually amazed by new eruptions from this volcano he had brought into the house. But that was not the important part. Look at that latent *pride* in him. Perhaps some day, after all, it would be Tilford, Tilford, Tilford, Tilford, & Tilford. Perhaps some day now he would have a son.



Chapter Twelve



I

THIS was really remarkably like the old days. Outside the lawn flowed steadily downhill to the beach, and along the pier the boat bobbed, nibbling the dock. Her room was much the same, empty as it was of all her things already packed. She was sleeping like a child these days, and usually she was first to breakfast. The door was half open leading to the white bathroom, and then to Pamela's room; of course Pamela was gone. Downstairs she could hear her father and Mrs. Pomeroy, and now a new voice, Hilda's voice.

She took one last look at her bags; she had packed all but her toilet things, for which she scrutinized carefully space reserved in a small pig-skin valise. She was standing with her hand at the back of her head, tipping the head forward slightly; she was smiling. Uncertainly she peered around the room. Yes, everything. How many of these things she was taking she took unchanged from her preparations so long before! She had found her maps and memoranda; in the blue desk was that old pile of lists, itineraries, scribbled suggestions, half-forgotten plans. She had had to get a new passport, however; that other one had long ago expired.

Downstairs Mr. and Mrs. Mark Tilford were awaiting

her for dinner, her last dinner home. Of course, it was nonsense to think in any such final terms, but still she expected to be away, not merely from home and Chicago, but away from America, at least a year, perhaps, quite possibly, longer. She remembered her old dreams, she resealed them with faint ruefulness. Here she was, on the point of that same departure she had planned, just before the party with Fay, two years, over two years before; evidently for those two years her life had been a closed circle. Oh, but nonsense; it had been nothing of the kind! She heard Hilda's low, definite voice; dinner was almost ready.

"Joan!" Hilda was calling.

"Just a minute!"

She dropped her pencil and changed hurriedly. There they all were, waiting for her. Her father was quiet, rather subdued, and Hilda a trifle surly. Hilda was envious, she said, of this long trip. She had given her dozens of addresses in Paris and Milan, Zurich and Copenhagen. Mrs. Pomeroy surveyed with resigned complacency this final farewell. Ralph and Pamela, Pamela so queer this way carrying a child, watched. Just the six of them at dinner. A few people were coming in later, a few very old, close friends. Mr. Tilford promised to open his last bottle of Chartreuse. During dinner and later Joan listened to what seemed distant talk.

"It's early," Hilda said. "Please, will you not stay?"

"No—gotta go," Joan heard Pamela's voice. "Good-by, Joan. Say, write once in a while, will you?" She turned to Hilda and her father. "Swell dinner. Thanks."

Mr. Tilford and Joan walked with them to the door. They said farewells.

"I'm going upstairs," Joan said. "I have a lot to do and I ought to turn in early."

"I'll come along," suggested Mr. Tilford. "Perhaps I can help."

"Sure. Please do. Come on up, Hilda."

They all leaned back comfortably in her room, Mr. Tilford lighting a cigar carefully; Joan sat rotating her shoulders slightly, so that she felt strength and energy as her chest moved outward. Mr. Tilford asked a final question about the shop. It had been sad, giving up the shop. He said it wasn't worth his while actually to take it on, but he permitted her to sell it at very reasonable terms. Joan, clearing up everything, found she had netted just over \$3,450 since the shop began. Quite good. Mr. Tilford promised to watch Georgiana and help her if she got into difficulties. Joan looked at the pile of bags.

"You're traveling heavy," Mr. Tilford complained.

"No," Joan answered, "not really—and anyway there are always porters and things."

"And now—about itinerary?"

She had no really definite plans. Sitting there, quiet now and lazy, with her arms folded over her head so that her hair was bounded squarely by her arms, she named routes and places.

"Once I thought I'd go all the way to 'Trebizond,'" she said. "That's Colchis, you know."

"You'd never get there," Mr. Tilford said.

"Probably not," agreed Joan. But she said she would beyond any doubt go somewhere in the Levant, and then strike further eastward; she must see Siam and Singapore. This, however, was all too remote for present consideration. What was really in her mind was the train at twelve sharp tomorrow and the boat from New York Wednesday.

Along about midnight Hilda started yawning, and then

Joan yawned. Mr. Tilford rose from his chair carefully and Joan followed them to the door.

"Good night," she called.

"Good night."

"Good night."

II

She had telegraphed Fay and certainly Fay would meet her at the station. Fay must be quite a person, with that curiously-named play still going after six, seven months now.

And of course she must see Philip. Why not? She would see Philip as she would see, say, her father, or Ralph, or the man with the bright manicure who ate olives across the table at lunch. She hadn't thought of Philip twice in six months. But she wanted to see him—of course.

The landscape was sliding past the train windows. The wheels beat in two-four time, very quickly—tum-tum!

III

Fay was at the station, surely enough. She was wearing a gray squirrel coat close across her broad shoulders; her red smile was right across her face and they grasped each other's shoulders, then kissed, clinging. Surveying each other then at arm's length, they both spontaneously began to laugh.

"Let me *look* at you!" Joan exclaimed.

"You're just the same," Fay said; "your eyes are brighter, maybe."

Joan assembled her bags and gave the check to the

baggage-man. They walked down the station close together.

"Where will you stay? How long will you be here? Where *are* you going?"

Fay asked a dozen questions. Joan disentangled them and answered. She named a hotel.

"Till Wednesday," she said.

"That's not much time," Fay complained. "Well, come along."

"You look extremely prosperous," Joan admired her.

"I've been lucky."

They reached the hotel.

"Come on up," Joan said. "I want another breakfast."

"Too bad you didn't get here yesterday." Fay was full of gossip. "You just missed Richard Northway. He left last night for Chicago—you must have crossed trains. He's on his way back to Shirley. Imagine! Say, this is a nice room. You're beginning well. You're all alone? How's your father?"

After lunch they went to see Fay's play. It was Saturday and there was a matinée. After the performance they went back-stage and Joan met all the actors. They hung around her, bobbing at Fay too; Joan thought it had been months since she had had so jolly an afternoon. The play was a comedy, rather influenced by Molnar. Fay hadn't quite found her individually, indisputably own feet yet. But the play was a success. It was one of those things at which you wept because it was the funniest thing you had ever seen.

There was plenty of gossip to exchange. All afternoon they talked.

"Had you heard about Macmillan?"

"No." Joan shook her head.

"Imagine, he's gone to a monastery. Down in Ken-

tucky. That silent place. The Trappists, I think they call themselves. No one can talk. Macmillan said he had to get away."

"How curious—in contrast to Richard."

"What do you mean? I don't understand."

"Well," Joan explained, "Richard went away because he didn't know anything—didn't he? He wanted to know the why of things. I'll bet Macmillan is going away because he knows too much. He's probably discovered that knowledge isn't so much, once you have it; he must be going away to forget all that Richard wanted to know."

Joan told her about Mr. Tilford and Hilda. Fay listened.

Richard and Shirley were in Joan's mind. She was so glad they were back together! They loved each other! How different she was from Shirley—it just occurred to her—really there was no analogy at all between them except that both looked well and were contemporary Chicagoans. Shirley was an artist. She was serene, feminine, selfish, and in an amazing manner could command her impulses. And how different Richard was from Phil.

She and Fay talked eagerly until dinner time, pouring downward mutually interrupted funnels of conversation; they could not dine together because Fay had an important date, but anyway Joan wanted to dine alone. They had mentioned Philip once or twice. How satisfying it was to be close to Fay again! Indeed, it had been Fay who had ended in Joan that dominant ghost. Accidentally. But she had ended it. And it was so good to discover, in talking to Fay, confirmation by the most difficult possible test that Philip was—who was Philip?

"You saved my life," Joan laughed.

"I almost killed you."

"It was the same thing."

That *had* been the climax. It had seemed too much, at the time; too cruel; too unreasonable. The two people she most loved—together! Well, all such stupid feelings were done now. "Can't you come to Europe with me?" Joan eagerly begged. But Fay said No, she might fly over for a brief trip later, in summer, but even that was vague and she couldn't promise. She was too busy. She had another play going on in December, and an amateur group was planning to revive "Judgment Jane"; meantime she was very busy writing. Several magazines had asked her for short stories; she had been at work eleven weeks on the first one, and it simply wouldn't come out.

They saw each other every day. Wednesday was coming soon now.

IV

She called him up. He answered. It was very easy. He was working then on a newspaper again, as in Chicago, anonymously. That meant that he too had lived in a closed circle these two years; and from what he said over the telephone, evidently he too was on his feet again. Well, that was good—wasn't it?

Yes, she was sailing Wednesday. Where? Oh, lots of places. Sure. He was feeling fine. She had had—yes—a good couple of years. Did she look the same? Well, how did she know?—it took another person to see and tell. Tonight? No. Date with a friend of Hilda's. Tomorrow noon? Sorry—no—Fay. Tomorrow night? Yes, splendid. Eight o'clock at the hotel.

He did not sound glib as she thought he might; nor did he sound in the least constrained. And she was sure her own brief conversation had been casual enough and natural; and indeed why not? Tomorrow night. Good.

She had lots of things to do tomorrow. Her last day. Those three visas to get and the new books somehow had to be packed.

He rang up in the morning.

"Dinner clothes?"

She said, "Of course."

They had not much else to say and after a fraction of a second, each waiting for the other, they rang off.

v

He was exactly the same except thinner. Philip Hubbard. He had always been angular, and in spite of it curiously, excitingly graceful, but now he was gaunt and still, in that absurd provocative way, quick and silent, elastic like a leopard. His head cocked toward her with his hands behind his back and his shoulders as usual atilt. Under her square black hair her blue eyes were calm. Her teeth and eyes were very white—blue white. She sat down.

"I'm so glad you're well."

She tried twice, almost invisibly, to speak.

"You're looking extraordinarily well."

"I feel well."

"And you're sailing tomorrow?"

She nodded.

"For how long? Do you know?"

"About a year—perhaps longer. I'm not sure just where I'm going or what I want to do."

"Lucky woman," Philip smiled.

They were in the restaurant and he ordered. She wanted chicken and asparagus. The waiter recommended poulet sauté au chablis. That was with small onions,

mushrooms, and bits of bacon. Cocktail? Sure. Joan nodded.

"What I mean is," she explained, "I wish I was some one like Fay or Shirley—some one with something to *do*. That's been the trouble with me right along. I don't know anything. I can't do things."

"Going to England first?"

"Yes."

"You might pick up some first editions for me. There are a couple of things I want badly. I'll give you a check."

She agreed. "I was in the book business," she told him.

"I heard you were running a library."

"Been in Chicago at all these last years?"

He shook his head.

"I've traveled a little," Joan mentioned. "Maine—Montana. You knew of my father's marriage?"

"Read about it."

"He's fine," Joan said. "I was rather jealous of Hilda at first. But I got over it."

"You got over lots of things, didn't you?"

But he was smiling. The soup came. She dipped in her spoon. It wasn't hard to look at him.

"How is Shirley?"

She mentioned then, gossiping, Ralph, Pamela, Macmillan, Fitzhumber. They agreed Fay was perfect—they burst into quick mutual enthusiasm here—she deserved her luck.

"And it wasn't luck," Joan added.

"You can't do things?" he repeated, his face down now, meditating. "I wonder—do you know what you did to me?"

"Fay told me some."

He nodded. She could see his tongue, just edging his lips.

"But," she asked, and slowly let her eyes reach him fully, "you're all right now?"

"Quite."

"Say it," Joan said.

"Yes, I'm all right."

"What did the T. R. book do?"

"It went very well—over twenty thousand. All the libraries bought it."

"You must be rich."

"No—no," he shook his head, protesting, laughing a little.

"And what are you doing now?"

"For two years I didn't do anything."

"I know."

"I didn't want to do anything."

"Well—but now?"

"The publishing people offered me the national-biography job again. I turned it down. It seemed too much like stretching a hand back over a two-mile canyon to something that might not be there. You have no idea what you did to me. I went completely to hell. Talk about a thousand devils! Fay didn't tell you half. She couldn't, because she didn't know. Nor am I going to tell you now. It's all old stuff ——" he broke off. "As to work. I'm doing a little of what I did a few years ago. Reviews. I've been offered one of the editorships of the *New Democracy*. I may take that. I'm not sure. Of course I have a regular newspaper job."

"I haven't seen any of your magazine stuff."

"Have you looked?"

"No," Joan admitted.

"But you're interested?"

"Of course," she said. "Now, Philip."

First time she used his name.

"Well, I've done two short pieces recently—straight criticism. As to books, I have one to deliver November 1st. Curious book. It's all done in my head. A novel."

"Oh!"

"Yes."

"I thought you said you couldn't write novels. You have no imagination. You said so."

"I can write this novel."

Joan was very hungry and attacked the chicken. The skin was brown and crisp and lifted from the white meat. There were bubbles in the crisp skin. Philip dabbled with his vegetables. "I want some water," she said. Water came. They ate. They watched.

"Why didn't you tell me about your father?"

There—take the plunge.

He put out his hands. "I've never explained it to myself."

"That's pretty cowardly, isn't it?"

"N-no." Obviously he didn't want to talk about this. "My father never existed for me. I didn't cut him out of my life; he never was there. I didn't see him for fifteen years. He's dead now, by the way. Poor fellow. My mother died, too. Yes. But about my father—call it what you like—oblivion, shame, or absolute non-knowledge. He never was an actuality. Except as a remote screen on which early events in my life wrote themselves. I didn't tell you first, and then it became impossible to tell you." He shrugged. "Sure, call it cowardice. Call me a cad. Besides," he added, his voice changing, "I didn't *want* to tell you. I wanted no one to know that I was imperfect—not even you."

"Oh, Philip, I loved you so!"

She hadn't meant to say that. It caught him with a knife crossed over the plate; he stopped.

"As to love ——"

"When Fay told me about your father—and told me about her and you ——"

"I know."

She drooped across the table.

"Everything was all wrong—all messed up—mixed up!"

"Yes," Philip agreed. "But whose fault?"

"I did love you so!"

"Do you now?"

"Oh no!" Joan shook her head. "Really—sincerely—no!"

He nodded.

"And," she said, her mouth twisted slightly, "there was a lot you did to me, too."

She thought flittingly of Martin; that was the one really unreasonable thing in all these things—how she couldn't bear to think of Martin.

He lit a cigarette, shoving the plate away. "I dare say."

"Fay told you?"

"No, she didn't say much."

"Are you living with Fay now?"

"No."

"Why not? She loves you."

"I don't think she does. Anyway, I can't."

"You did once."

"Yes."

"It all seemed such a *waste*!" she cried.

"I've felt that, too, Heaven knows."

"I've been a bum," Joan said.

He looked up.

"What do you mean?"

"Do I need explain? I've been a bum."

"On account of me?"

"Don't be a fool," she shrugged.

His face tilted up. "I'm sorry," he said.

"It was this way." Joan motioned the waiter to clear the table. She too lit a cigarette. She was very appraisive and calm. Philip looked shot to bits suddenly. What a surprise it was to talk to Philip this way—Philip!—and find that she wasn't moved, but he was; that she wasn't hurt—*he* was! "It was like this. You could have had me. I was all new and fresh and I loved you. Oh yes, I did. I *loved* you! And I don't love you now—no—not at all. But then——! Well, you could have had me, and now I think it was mostly your fault that you didn't. You tried? Sure. But you weren't in a way strong enough in yourself. Of course it was my weakness, too. And silliness. It was my fault, too. I was an ignorant ninny. I dare say I've paid the price of that ignorance. I'm all straight now. I've discovered the cost of ignorance and paid it. Yes, partly it was my fault—but mostly it was yours. You should have understood better. You should have understood better what I wanted—how I felt—about things. Well, you didn't. You weren't strong enough. And after you went I rolled in the dirt. Oh yes. Dirt. What was yours—all yours—went to others—lots of others—dirtily. Well, no—that's not quite true. I don't mean that. I don't mean that at all. Yes, I do. But, anyway—dirty or not—it should have been all yours—I wanted it to be yours. But—I enjoyed it—see?"

The waiter suggested peach Melba for dessert.

They both nodded.

"Joan."

He was whispering.

"Well?"

VI

This was all Joan really wanted to say and she had definitely wanted to say it; perhaps she was turning a knife in a wound—for him—she wasn't sure. And immediately she felt extreme remorse because obviously he was so hurt; she shook her head very quickly—oh, she hadn't meant to be vindictive—now—Philip! "Please, don't look that way—Phil ——"

After dinner they went into the foyer of the hotel. No, she didn't want to go to the theater. Movies—no. Well, what to do? "I do wish I had a car!" she laughed. He did not laugh. They walked slowly along Fifty-seventh Street and then cut into Central Park. It was October, but still very warm. "We might have coffee later." He agreed.

Yes, she had said her little piece now; she was through. Lord! tomorrow she was sailing—she was going away—this was her final ending—after this she was new again, everything was beginning. She breathed. She felt a little tired.

Then later they were perfect—they were being friends.

First all sorts of things about Philip's life—how *curious* she was—what a lot of her he had taken into him, and still had—so that in finding out about him really she was finding out about herself.

And what fun it was to talk about herself, too. All the interesting things. Why, it was the first time in years, in *years*, she had aired in this idle, intimate way, what she thought, what she dreamed, what she had for breakfast in the morning, what she saw hidden in the newspaper that afternoon, what she noticed in that fellow with the

black mustache, and how she must arrange to meet some friends in England. How fine to talk about such small, delightful things! Intimacy. With some one who knew her and understood.

They were smiling and laughing, sentence by sentence coaxing conversation between them.

"Oh!" Philip cried jubilantly. "Let's pretend ——"

He stopped.

"What?"

"I was thinking what fun it would be to pretend we were meeting for the first time."

"No." She quickly shook her head.

But she was feeling jubilation too, if only in reaction from freeing herself of that long speech. What she felt most deeply, however, was another, different, very simple and very pure emotion. She faced some one whom once she had loved and now did not love. There was an unutterable poignance to this emotion. She remembered how they had laughed together, burned, quarreled, wept; she remembered how they had discovered each other, how they had become friends. Between them was a vast complex of desires, ambitions, mutual memories, pains, delights; for years it had stretched between them; and now it stretched no more. She was facing herself as she had lived, or died, years before; she was profoundly moved, finding she was no longer moved. This evidently was what life came to. One lived, loved, died; she had done all three. And now what was left? A haunting memory, a poignance in the shadows, an unwilling admission that the unreality of dreams was true.

She stared, blinked.

It was all too incredible. She felt like touching, not flesh but wood.

VII

"And so—now—you are going away."

"Yes," Joan nodded.

"For good—so to speak."

"Well—if you mean I'll be different when I come back—no."

"You may be very different."

"I've done all the changing I'm going to do," said Joan.

"You can't tell what might happen abroad."

"I may marry," she admitted. "I want to. Women want to. I'm twenty-three."

"But—what you called messiness—that's all over?"

Joan looked up.

"Oh, absolutely!"

He nodded. She was a little angry at his nod. She said directly:

"I'm through with mimicry."

"How do you know?"

"Old Philip, always doubting."

He shook his head.

"Dear Philip—always ——" She broke off. "I know myself better—really." She nodded. "I know how surprisingly unimportant physical things are—how they must be complemented by everything else—by sympathy and knowledge—you might say by beauty. When I want beauty in some one, of course I'll try to get him—it."

"That's a good thing to know."

"And you?" Joan asked. "You're coming abroad, maybe?"

"I stay here," he declared. "I'm American. I belong here. I have work to do."

"There's such a thing as getting perspective."

"That's largely exaggerated, I think."

"And anyway you've been abroad a couple of times."

"Oh God!" He stretched up his arms. "To see you now—as some one new—to be introduced to you casually now and see lightning darting purple over all my life! Good God! You are too damned luminously lovely ——"

No, he mustn't touch her.

"Bygones," he whispered.

Why shouldn't he?

"I'm going to kiss you, Philip."

She wanted to weep. How strange—it was all over now—life was moving from her. She kissed him and it was like kissing anybody. Bygones ——

"Why did you want to see me?" he asked.

She shrugged. "My dear—why not?"

"I was scared," he said.

"Really? I wasn't—I was uneasy, but only at the first plunge of calling you. Oh, Philip—I do so like you—I wanted to say good-by. And I suppose, too, I wanted to end something. I wanted to see you and prove to myself that you didn't frighten me any more. So that I would be free. I wanted to see you and know that actually you *were* dead. Oh, I can't go on!"

"This is rather a mortuary conversation."

"Yes."

"If you want to know the truth, I'll tell you." He shifted in his chair.

"What is it?"

"You wanted to see me, but not too closely—not at all intimately—so that always you will have at least one last illusion. Isn't that right?" He paused. "You loved me. You haven't had me. Therefore I am always a further dream. I loved you. I haven't had you. There-

fore for me you're the final and unattainable ideal." He laughed shortly. "Oh yes! I feel it too."

"You're right, I suppose."

"I dare say," Philip continued slowly, "that you find certain inconsistencies in what I've been saying tonight. I don't mind that—essentially I'm not being inconsistent at all. Simply I haven't said everything that's in my mind. A habit of mine." He smiled. "I'm sorry if you've been careless with yourself—in reaction. So was I careless with myself, just as careless, just as hopelessly, jumbledly careless. In that we're even. I'm glad I kissed you—I like to kiss beautiful people. I'm rather sorry you're going away, just as you're sorry, I think, to leave me now. And I *would* like to see you as some one new—for the first time." He paused. "We're even on all these counts. But they're unimportant."

Joan was watching him carefully.

"What does count is something else. I dare say in some inexplicable fashion—you haven't told me—you consider that you lost me and in return found yourself. Is that true?" She nodded. "It's rather the same for me. You believed in romance—that's a silly word but, speaking largely, it fits—and I believed in loneliness. You discovered that romance doesn't work and I've discovered, I suppose, that loneliness doesn't work. Before I met you I felt that getting hurt in love affairs was simply the price I was willing to pay for insisting on remaining at the end alone. But you hurt me so vitally, smashed me up so terribly, that for a long time I felt I could never be lonely again. I came to realize through you something of human solidarity, that none of us can stand alone. I can never be altogether alone again. I'm sorry, in a way. That's what I've lost through you. What I've gained is this knowledge. That's all." He paused again.

Joan had something to say: "I didn't come, bot to nake——"

Fatigue. She meant to say not to make.

Philip interrupted her. "There's another thing I did want to say. A moment ago you said you weren't in love with me any more. I'm so glad of that! So glad! That, by the way, is the real reason why I was alarmed when you phoned; I thought quite possibly you loved me still. And you don't. I can tell—by your eyes. And I don't love you. I dare say you can tell, too. Doubtless you can look at me and wonder what is this one tiny ten-thousandth part of the present me which reminds you of some one you once loved. Yes! Same with me! So—we needn't fear one another any more. You can go on to Trebizond, knowing you won't get there. I can try to be lonely—and realize now I can never be. So—we're quits. Quits."

They were almost back at her hotel.

"I'm glad you said all that," Joan whispered.

"It's all true."

"I know."

"What you've said is true, too."

"Philip, I'm suddenly awfully happy."

"I too."

Sometimes she had thought her tragedy with Philip was unreasonable; but not now. He was a man who did not want to marry and she was a girl who did want to marry, and they had been so unfortunate as to fall in love with one another; that was all. This final conversation made it once for all clear to her. The illness of his father, it was now apparent, like the sanity of her father, was an accident. His proposal that night they had broken was irrelevant; a weakness serving to keep the issue from being too easy and clear-cut. Philip was rather weak and perfectly honest—a curious combination.

They were in the lobby of the hotel in front of the elevator. A bell-boy whizzed by. Philip backed her in a corner.

"There's a final thing I want to say. I hesitate to say it. But I feel I must. And I want to. Here we are, you see; each of us free of each other; free at last and happy to be free. But there's another point, which is that the acquisitive instinct is so enormously strong in all our lives. Free, we still desire; free, we still dream. Neither of us will ever give up the fact we haven't had each other. So ——" he paused and quietly smiled. "We might begin again. We're quits, and so I can say this. I don't love you, and I don't think you love me—but shall we risk it—marry?—will you marry me?"

Beyond Philip's eyes Joan saw the red signal of a moving elevator flash down the pattern of white lights in the floor-indicator.

"Philip," she shook her head quietly, "no."

Was it relief she saw flitting across his face? She took his hand abruptly; his other hand then crushed it.

"No," she repeated. "Really, I don't think so, Phil. You said it before—we're quits." She thought, No, he wasn't weak.

"I'm perfectly sincere."

"Of course."

"Well then"—he half-laughed—"I dare say this *is* good-by."

"I'm so glad all this has happened."

"Me too."

"Maybe," and Joan laughed, "I like you too much to marry you."

"No," he shook his head, "that's not the reason."

They hung a moment. The elevator indicator was flashing.

"So—good-by."

"Good-by."

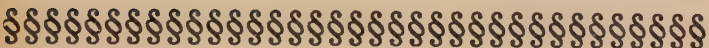
She walked with him to the door. They hugged each other's arms.

"Good-by."

"My dear, it's all going to be fun now."

He reached down and kissed her. They both laughed a little. Then she saw him turn down the street, and she watched him a moment in farewell.

Joan reapproached the elevators. "Going up," she said.



rug, and a few books. She paid the taxi and saw her bag go up the moving stairway.

She climbed onto the dock and at the desk noted admiringly the accent and poise of the steward who took her tickets while an American immigration officer stamped her passport. Then walking up the covered gangway, she found she was on the ship, and following another steward through lanes and lanes of cabins she reached one that was her own. There were flowers on the washstand—nice of Fay—and the bed looked comfortable.

She dropped the books and rug and sat down, not knowing quite what to do. They had told her that first she must see the bath steward and then the dining steward and then find a deck chair. All these things seemed rather formidable just now. She rang several bells. Up in the purser's office there were several telegrams, one from her father.

She stuffed them in her pocket and went out on deck. There were a lot of ropes lying on the lower deck forward. A siren blew with a roar and people ran along the dock. She watched the gangplank being taken in and then stood at the rail until the ship was past the Battery. The tugs nuzzled the ship like beetles. Later she slept till dinner and at dinner wore a new white-and-silver gown, and found in the trunk a gorgeous flame-colored fan her father had given her, a birthday present a year or so before.

II

Joan was brisk with pleasure over the ship. She liked the people she met at her table, and, never having been on a big ship before, found it exciting to explore. But most of the second day she sat wrapped in her rug, per-

mitting herself the lonely luxury of ease. She didn't bother at all with retrospection. But idle moods descended to her brain. "We're so damned young," she thought. All of them were too young, ridiculously young.

"I suppose I'm just an average person, after all," she decided. That was an important decision—maybe that was when you really grew up—when you discovered a commonness in yourself, when you realized that after all you were only one out of very many. No matter how individual you might be, no matter how you puzzled, soared, wept, dreamed, in however unique a manner, always the uniqueness was important as rising out of human commonness, and set against it; individuality counted only as a product of the mass. She did not regret, thinking this, that she had been casual with herself in reaction; all that she regretted was that she had not brought proper joy to indulgence. Now she knew how precious pleasure was. Of course there remained that old sentimentality—something was gone from her, something gone.

Growing up was a process in which evidently you exchanged formulæ for experience. You started with certain preconceived and perhaps unconscious standards, not merely standards of conduct, but of the whole adjustment of yourself to life, and you tried to fit life to these formulated standards. Then as you grew up you discovered that life didn't fit. Instead your standards had to be adjusted, your formulæ discarded. For a while loss of these standards left you helpless. You looked out of the window and saw you had no treaty with familiar things. The grass was changed, the meadows different; birds on trees were hostile; waves mounting on sand were not the same. It was impossible for a long time to make any contact at all with these things. They were both

foreign and hostile. They existed only so that you could make war on them. And then later you changed again. You left your formulæ discarded. Let life come on.

But how ridiculous, to see life at a new beginning or a new ending. Instead life was flow. She wasn't even twenty-four. All of this was but a prelude to maturity. Of course they were too young. But could they help it? And—youth! She had youth! That was the saving thing. And; she knew, she wouldn't have missed a bit of this for anything. But she knew now she would find no Golden Fleece; she would not find any real castle in Spain.

She wondered what would happen as the cool and beautiful impact of life continued; she wondered how all these lives and contacts of her early years would distribute themselves in years to come. Perhaps there was no balance, perhaps no pattern. But she thought of that old idea, of that unique secret mold in which she was composed—the mold that Philip broke. She wasn't unique. She knew that now. But still, hadn't the mold finally melted and been recast again?—for now Philip was part of the mold, part of the pattern; he had been absorbed into her life, disturbed in it; the impingement of his beauty was part of her forever and a new pattern had arisen. So perhaps life wasn't meaningless, after all.

"I want to find a man like a God," she whispered to the wind scuttling down the decks. Her face was intently and candidly romantic, shadowed by the retrospection of this mood; her usually sensible eyes clouded a moment, diffusing directness out of dreams. "I want to give myself utterly to some one for his happiness. I want to make myself important by being important above everything to some one else. I want to compress myself into a tiny tight

ball and let some one have me—some one who will give himself to me in the same way. I want to be loved!”

The water as far as she could see was blue and silver. A few gulls still drifted with the ship, floating and circling like flying scimitars. There were no waves.

THE END

Chicago, May, 1922—
Paris, October, 1928.





